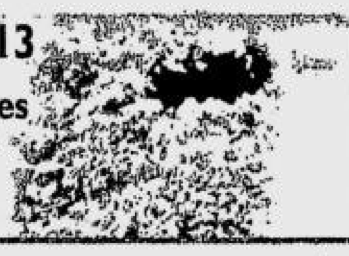
■ World / A9
Purged Chinese Communist Party leader Zhao Ziyang dies

■ Business / B1
T-bill rates decline across the board

■ Across / A13
Oil spill damages 7 kilometers of coral reef



■ Metro / A15
Third witness in Nida Blanca slay surfaces

■ News / A2
Gringo Honasan takes over RAM once more

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, January 18, 2005 ★★ 40 pages / 3 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 41 P18

Recto slams unfair tax structure

By Michael Lim Ubac

INDEPENDENT power producers (IPPs) pay less than 3 percent of their gross sales in taxes every year, lower than the taxes paid by public school teachers and policemen as a percentage of their income, a senator said yesterday.

Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the Senate ways and means committee, said this was another reason no new taxes should be imposed this year.

Citing official data, Recto said the combined gross sales of 22 IPPs reached P221.6 billion in 2003 alone, but they paid only P6.57 billion "in all kinds of national taxes" that year.

He blamed the tax holidays granted to IPPs for the unequal tax burden.

Recto noted that compared to the IPPs, government employees—those hired by the national government—paid four times more in income taxes percentage-wise.

RECTO/ A6

Nene: Hard to tell when Erap is serious

By Michael Lim Ubac, TJ Burgonio and Cynthia D. Balana

ERAPTION YAN!

EVEN Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. is confused.

"There are times when it's difficult to distinguish between the jokes of Erap

NENE/ A6

RP credit rating cut by one notch

A POD of dolphins swims across the Bohol Sea, protected by whalers who have become tourist guides. AFP

Still better than 2-notch downgrade, say analysts

By Doris C. Dumlao, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Michelle V. Remo

THE CREDIT downgrade finally came. But the downgrade of the country's long-term foreign currency debt was only by one notch instead of the two notches that some investors had feared.

Global credit rating firm Standard & Poor's yesterday lowered to BB- from BB the long-term foreign currency sovereign debt, citing the government's "inadequate" response to its fiscal problems.

The S&P cut, to three notches below investment grade for the country's foreign obligations, came weeks before Moody's Investors Service, another rating firm, is expected to deliver its own downgrade on the Philippines.

A downgrade raises interest rates and further jacks up debt payments. Some legislators had warned last year that a credit downgrade for the Philippines would be disastrous, saying that a one-percent increase in interest could mean P30 billion more in debt payments.

The Philippine government, Asia's biggest issuer of sovereign debt after Japan, has direct foreign and domestic debt obligations of about $65 billion.

Despite Malacañang's claim that the fiscal crisis was over, S&P also lowered the long-term local currency sovereign credit rating to BB+ from BBB- and the short-term local currency debt rating to B from A-3.

The outlook on the long-term ratings, however, was "stable" which means that no further downgrade is likely over the near term.

Governor Rafael Buenaventura of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said the downgrade would not likely affect forthcoming foreign borrowings by the government as the market had already factored into the pricing of debt papers a two-notch downgrade.

Last October, S&P had already warned of

RP CREDIT/ A4

WHALE PLAYGROUND

Bohol sea wolves turn into shepherds

ON THE BOHOL SEA—The men of Pamilacan whistled and clapped with the adrenalin rush that came with the sighting of four giant dorsal fins shooting across the front of their boat.

"There, there, uncle," Joseph Valeroso, perched atop the narrow bow, yelled to Tito Valeroso barely an hour into the hunt.

The elder man gunned the engine and the outrigger made a tight turn to starboard in pursuit of the melonhead whales. A flanking pod of Fraser's dolphins escaped to port.

In nine out of 10 cases in the past, the chase would have ended with the blood-soaked slaughter of one of the giant sea mammals, an astounding kill ratio far superior to that of Captain Ahab's fictional harpooners in Herman Melville's book "Moby Dick."

Now, however, the fearsome spears and gaffs are gone from the whaling boats of Eastern Visayas, replaced with video-cam-toting tourists yelping with delight.

On this day, a Western passenger on a nearby boat couldn't restrain himself and jumped into the 300-meter-deep waters, trying to swim with the dolphins.

The hardy fishermen of Pamilacan, a limestone outcrop without fresh water

BOHOL/ A6

Saguisag accuses Sandoval of impropriety

By Armand N. Nocum and Fe Zamora

THE FORMER acting presiding justice of the Sandiganbayan, who briefly presided over the trial of ousted President Joseph Estrada, is being accused by the defense lead counsel of committing impropriety for allegedly lobbying for his appointment to the post during office hours.

The accusation of defense lead counsel Rene Saguisag against Sandiganbayan Justice Edilberto Sandoval resulted in a weeklong suspension of the hearings on the Estrada cases, which have already dragged on for more than three years.

"How can you criticize others who do what you did. I am not making this up. What do I get if I make this up. We cannot subject the fate of our client to someone ...," said Saguisag, who let his statement drop off.

The defense lawyer said he had to raise the matter in light of Sandoval's criticism of his colleagues who had allegedly lobbied for their appointments.

Apparently caught off-guard, Sandoval shot back: "I deny what you're saying."

Saguisag said that during a chance meeting with Sandoval late last year, the justice allegedly admitted to him meeting with Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza, a leading member of the Liber-

SAGUISAG/ A4

Cop in Aklan carnage had feared for his life

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr. and Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—The night before his world crumbled, PO2 Jonathan Moreño sent his wife three text messages expressing fears for his life and asking her to be brave.

In an earlier text message, he had said that a man had been shadowing him.

On Sunday, on the last day of the festival in Kalibo, Aklan, in honor of the Sto. Niño, the 31-year-old policeman went on a murderous rampage that left seven people—including himself—dead in a bloody Ati-atihan celebration.

Moreño's first text message to his wife, Ma. Hitzhel, read: "*Delicado na guid di* (It is getting dangerous here)."

The second text said: "*Gang, tibayan mo luob mo, kaya mo yan* (Dear, be strong. You can handle it)."

The third and last text bore the same plea.

Jonathan did not elaborate, Hitzhel told the INQUIRER. But in an earlier interview on dyEZ Aksyon Radyo, she said her husband had also texted her on Friday, saying a man had been looking for him that day and asking when he would be transferred to Negros.

Some members of his family said Jonathan so feared for his life that he had asked to be transferred out of Aklan and that the supposed transfer was to have taken effect on Jan. 16—the day he went berserk.

Interviewed on GMA Network last night, Hitzhel said her husband had told her he had received a death threat.

"I did not know from whom because that was all he said," Hitzhel said.

She was shocked when she heard the news that her husband had gone berserk at the Ati-atihan.

COP/ A6

'Aviator,' 'Sideways' gain edge in Oscars

NBC
GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS
HOLLYWOOD FOREIGN PRESS

HILARY SWANK and Leonardo DiCaprio, favorite contenders in their respective categories, flash triumphant smiles at the conclusion of the 62nd Golden Globe Awards. AP

By Ruben V. Nepales
LA Correspondent

LOS ANGELES—Reflecting the wide open race in Hollywood's awards season this year, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) divided its major Golden Globe awards Sunday among three films, "The Aviator, " "Million Dollar Baby" and "Sideways."

"The Aviator," Martin Scorsese's biopic on Howard Hughes, landed three trophies in star-studded 62nd Golden Globe Awards rites attended by the INQUIRER, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills: Best Picture, Drama; Best Actor, Drama for lead star Leonardo DiCaprio, and Best Original Score, Howard Shore.

"Million Dollar Baby," about an aspiring female boxer, clinched Best Director for Clint Eastwood and Best Actress, Drama for Hilary Swank. Its commercial run was originally scheduled for this year, but Eastwood convinced Warner Bros. to release the movie late last year, to compete in the 2004 awards derby.

"Sideways," a brilliant and funny adaptation of Rex Pickett's novel about two middle-aged men, picked up Best Picture, Comedy and Best Screenplay, for Alexan-

AVIATOR/ A4

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon and eastern sections of Visayas will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/18/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Gringo back at helm of RAM

By Alcuin Papa

FORMER opposition Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan has once again assumed the leadership of the militant Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa (RAM) following the death yesterday of its chair, Commodore Domingo Calajate.

In a statement sent to reporters at Camp Aguinaldo, RAM-National Capital Region chapter head Air Force Col. Reynaldo Samaco (ret.) said Honasan took over as chair of the 25-man RAM steering committee composed of other ranking RAM officers who were elected to the panel in December 2003.

The other members of the RAM steering committee include police Directors Vic Batac and Eduardo Matillano, Army Col. Rafael Galvez, Navy Capt. Felix Turingan, Commodore Rex Robles and Air Force Colonels Oscar Legaspi and Dante Bernate, all of whom are retired.

"Due to the death of Commodore Calajate, the elected steering committee immediately assumed leadership of the RAM to provide direction and affirmative actions to all its members and to the nation to which it is firmly committed to serve," Samaco quoted Honasan as saying.

The re-assumption of Honasan of the RAM chairmanship comes amid reports of destabilization plots against the Arroyo administration.

Honasan is closely identified with the political opposition. He served as overall security officer of the late movie icon and opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., who ran under the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) in the May 10 elections.

Calajate, the most senior member of RAM at 84, was among the top RAM officials who were appointed to government positions after the Edsa II revolution in '2001. President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed him to the board of the Philippine Gaming Corp.

Samaco explained that the steering committee was supposed to assume the position of RAM's highest decision-making body in 2003 but this was deferred due to Calajate's illness and Honasan's term as an elected senator.

"The assumption of Honasan and the elected members of the steering committee was deferred upon the request of Commodore Calajate who was then diagnosed with cancer and Honasan who was still an elected senator," Samaco said.

Calajate, who took over from Honasan as RAM chair in 1995 after the latter's election to the Senate and was elevated as ex-officio chair, died yesterday morning at the Cardinal Santos Medical Center in San Juan of colon cancer.

During the impeachment trial of then President Joseph Estrada in 2001, Honasan clearly sided with Estrada, while Calajate and the other RAM officers supported the opposition.

In a meeting with RAM leaders then, Honasan pledged to be a nonpartisan juror but events showed otherwise as he was among the 11 senators who voted against the admission of crucial evidence against Estrada, the act that precipitated the Edsa II uprising.

RAM condemned the 11 senators and disowned Honasan.

In a May 3, 2001 article in the INQUIRER, Calajate said that although Honasan had neither been expelled from RAM nor did he resign from the group, he and RAM had effectively parted ways.

"RAM participated in Edsa II. Honasan sided with Erap," he said.

Honasan entered politics in 1992 shortly after obtaining a presidential pardon as part of a political settlement between the government and right-wing military coup plotters.

He is widely credited with leading the military uprising against the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos amid a disputed snap presidential election in February 1986.

E DEVELOPME
R COMMITMEN
REBOLUSYONARYONG
ALYANSANG
MAKABANSA

FILE photo shows President Macapagal-Arroyo (4th from left) with RAM members during a fellowship at Camp Aguinaldo on Feb. 22, 2002. The late Commodore Domingo Calajate is second from left. Others at the affair were Gringo Honasan (2nd from right), Danny Lim, Diomedio Villanueva, Proceso Maligalig and Hernani Figueroa. EDWIN BACASMAS

More forensic experts fly to Thailand

By Leila B. Salaverria

A NEW batch of forensic experts from the National Bureau of Investigation left for Phuket, Thailand, yesterday to help in the identification of the bodies of tsunami victims.

The 12-member team is headed by NBI medico-legal officer Dr. Renato Bautista and composed of forensic experts, fingerprint technicians and dentists. They will be joining the 8-member team of NBI experts headed by Dr. Idabel Pagulayan who left earlier for Phuket.

NBI Interpol chief Ricardo Diaz said the Thai government had requested that the Philippines send another batch of experts because the first team performed well and was cooperative.

"The experts from the Philippines who were in Thailand volunteered to do the dirty work like handling decomposing bodies that nobody wanted to touch. This apparently pleased the Thai authorities," he told reporters.

Diaz added that forensic work was one of the "specialties" of the NBI, noting that the bureau was responsible for identifying the burned and decomposing bodies and body parts recovered from the SuperFerry 14, which caught fire after an explosion in February last year.

According to the NBI Interpol chief, the Philippine government shouldered the airplane fare of the 12 forensic experts, saying that this was part of the country's aid to Thailand.

Hundreds of thousands were killed in South Asia after tsunamis triggered by an undersea earthquake swept coastlines the day after Christmas last year.

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Gov't takeover 'legal fraud'—Piatco lawyer

By Nancy Carvajal

LAWYERS for Philippine International Air Terminal Co. Inc. have sought the dismissal of the expropriation case against Piatco for Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, more than three weeks after a lower court gave the government the go-signal to take over the building and a few days after the Supreme Court issued a restraining order against the judge handling the case.

In a 22-page reply to Pasay City Judge Henrick Gingoyon's order of Dec. 21, 2004, turning Naia 3 over to the government, Piatco's lawyers yesterday moved for the dismissal of the case and accused the government of "legal fraud."

"An attempt to take private property for a private benefit under the guise of a public benefit is legal fraud [against] the owner," Piatco lawyer Eduardo Angeles said.

Angeles said the government's intention to eventually turn Naia 3 over to another private party meant it was not for public use.

"Rather, it is to transfer from Piatco to another private group for the latter's personal benefit," Angeles said.

He cited an INQUIRER article on Jan. 14 that quoted President Macapagal-Arroyo at the Manila Overseas Press Club as saying, "We will have somebody operate (Naia 3) whether it is by bidding or by starting from the ante-bellum (before the conflict started)."

Angeles also said the government was being deceptive when it claimed that Republic Act No. 8974 was not applicable in the case because what it was taking over was a building not a piece of land.

"The government does not want RA 8974 to apply, despite its pretense to give defendant just compensation for its property. In actuality, it wants to take over Piatco without paying the defendant a single centavo," Angeles said.

Angeles said that on Dec. 17—four days before the expropriation case was filed—the government offered Piatco $300 million (roughly P168 billion) for the terminal.

"Yet, when the case was filed at the Pasay RTC, the offer was only $53.4 million (P3 billion)," he said.

Angeles also questioned the lower court's jurisdiction over the case saying that the summons sent by the court was not received by the proper Piatco authority. The lawyer said the summons served on Haidee Balde, a private secretary, was insufficient.

"There being no proper service of summons, the trial court cannot take cognizance of a case for lack of jurisdiction over the defendant," Angeles said.

Ed to Ping: Apologize to followers of FPJ

By Christine O. Avendaño

AS THE opposition moves to consolidate itself, the rift between two of its key leaders worsened yesterday after Sen. Edgardo Angara demanded that Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson apologize to the supporters of the late Fernando Poe Jr. for causing the latter's loss in the 2004 presidential election.

Saying this would be the last time he would be talking about his rift with Lacson, Angara dismissed the possibility of a reconciliation with the latter even as other opposition leaders moved to consolidate their forces.

"If the unification of the opposition would start there (reconciliation with Lacson), I think nothing will happen because the differences I have with my adversary are nothing personal but more in principle," Angara said in Filipino.

"*Naghudas siya sa amin nung eleksyon*(He turned traitor during the elections)," he said.

Angara had blamed Lacson for being the main cause of Poe's loss in the May 10, 2004 elections.

The rift between the two senators began when Angara picked Poe over Lacson to be the opposition standard-bearer, even though Lacson was a member of Angara's Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino.

Despite talks held between Lacson and Poe to determine who would give way in the presidential race, they ended up running as opposition candidates, splitting the vote and paving the way for President Macapagal-Arroyo's victory.

In an interview with reporters, Angara said Lacson should seek forgiveness from the millions of Poe supporters for his actions.

"*Kailangan ipaliwanag niya kung bakit* in a short time *na* member *siya ng* opposition...*ang ginawa niya ay ipagtaksil ang kandidatura ni* FPJ (He has to explain why in the short time he was a member of the opposition he went against the candidacy of FPJ)," Angara said.

Reacting to Angara's statement, Lacson shot back: "*Bakit ako hihingi ng tawad, wala namang akong kasalanan sa mga tao*(Why should I ask for forgiveness, I did not nothing against the people)."

Lacson also told reporters he no longer wanted to comment on his rift with Angara.

Asked about his meeting with deposed President Joseph Estrada in Hong Kong last week, Lacson said his visit was a personal one and they just had dinner.

"*Walang pulitikang pinag-usapan* (We did not talk politics), that I assure you," he said.

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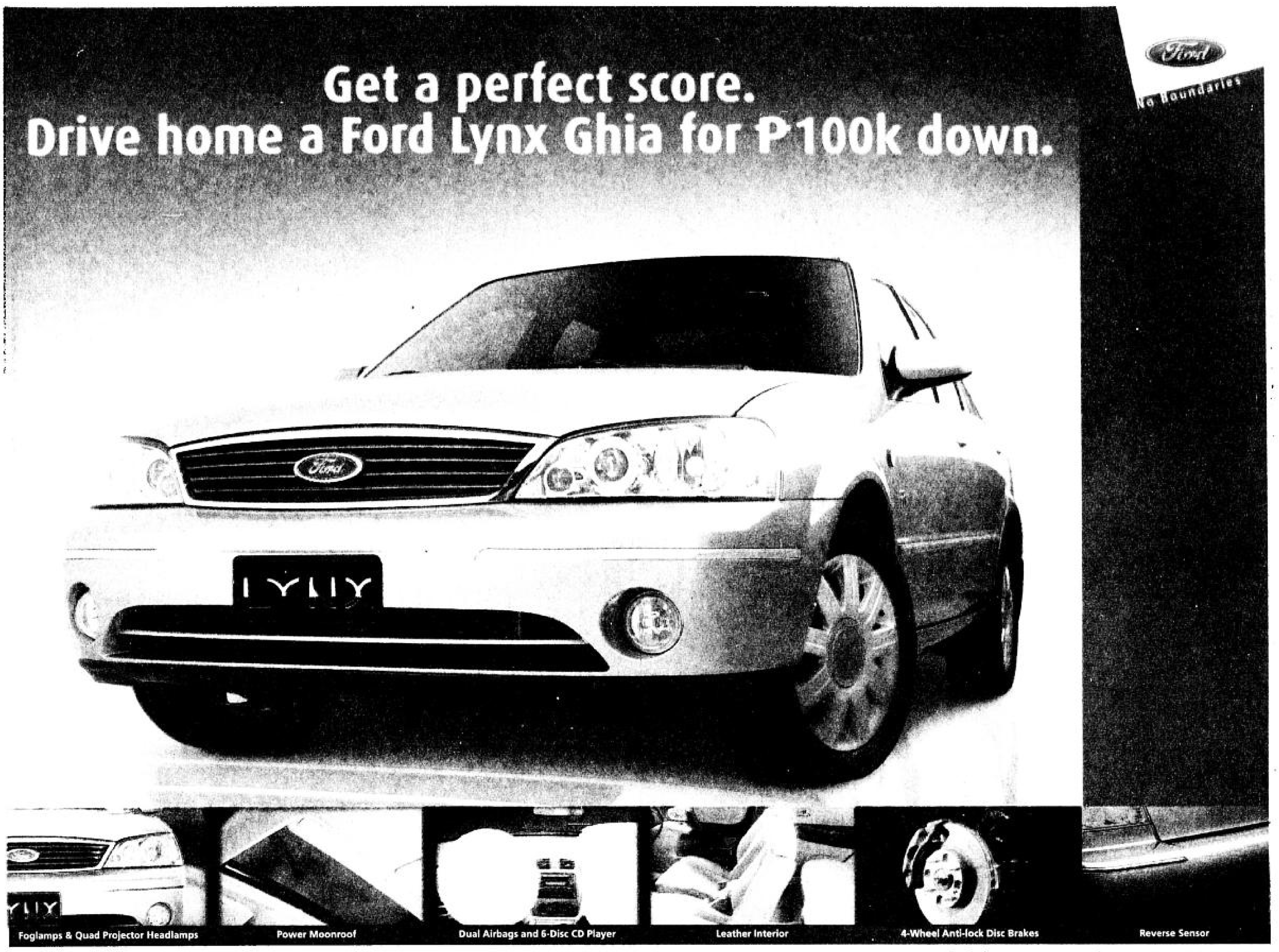
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Saguisag accuses Sandoval . . .

From page A1

al Party and said to be close to President Macapagal-Arroyo, to follow up on his possible appointment as presiding justice.

Sandoval did not get the post. Malacañang in December appointed Teresita de Castro, a junior member of the antigraft court, to be the presiding justice.

Last week, the Supreme Court accepted Sandoval's resignation as chair of the special division trying Estrada on plunder and perjury charges, but ordered him to stay on as a member until he could substantiate his claim that he was too sick to work.

Sandoval offered to quit his post as chair and member of the special division, citing health reasons. But he also lashed out at his colleagues for the "flip-flopping" that allowed Estrada to travel to Hong Kong for knee surgery and to be transferred to his rest house in Tanay, Rizal.

Sandoval had served as acting presiding justice for six months starting in July last year.

Saguisag made the accusation as he supported the argument of colleagues Serafin Cuevas and Jose Flaminiano, who wanted yesterday's hearing deferred until after Sandoval's offer to resign had been resolved.

But De Castro and Sandoval wanted to push through with the hearing.

Apologize

It was at this point that Saguisag first started hitting his "uncle" Jovito Salonga, a former Senate President, for allegedly claiming that defense lawyers were misleading the court on Estrada's recent trip to Hong Kong.

Salonga claimed that defense lawyers may have made "misrepresentations" to the court when they insisted that only Estrada's US doctor Christopher Mow should operate on Estrada when in fact they knew that Mow could not get a temporary medical certificate to practice in Hong Kong.

"If he can't prove it, he should apologize," he said, referring to Salonga.

Saguisag said he was ready to stop practicing as a lawyer and surrender his license to practice if Salonga could prove that the defense lawyers had known about Mow's inability to get a license.

With Mow's failure to get a license from Hong Kong's medical council, Estrada was forced to have the operation done by Chinese doctor Julian Chang.

No Mr. Suave ring tone this time from Sandiganbayan Justice Edilberto Sandoval, who is back in court as a member of the special division trying ousted President Joseph Estrada.

Hearty laugh

Salonga gave a hearty laugh at reports that Saguisag wanted him to apologize. "As someone once said, silence is the unbearable repartee," Salonga said between fits of laughter.

"Yes, he is my nephew, and I think he also praised me," Salonga said, still laughing at Saguisag, one of the country's celebrated human rights lawyers who fought the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s and 1980s.

As far as Salonga was concerned, he had raised the warning about Malacañang's intervention in the Estrada case and it was, he said, "mission accomplished."

"If Malacañang said it would not interfere (in the Estrada trial)—although I think the correct term is they will stop interfering—then I have accomplished my mission," Salonga said in a telephone interview.

In an analysis of Estrada's knee surgery in Hong Kong, Salonga said Ms Arroyo could face impeachment for allowing the deposed President to leave the country despite an ongoing case for plunder involving some P4.5 billion.

At the hearing, Saguisag vented his ire on Sandoval, whom he accused of showing bias against Estrada.

Sandoval was the lone dissenter on motions granting Estrada house arrest and the medical trip abroad.

Sandoval said that notwithstanding his offer to resign, he remained independent.

"I assure the defense that even if there was an attempt for me to resign, my objectivity remains," he said.

Office hours

When Saguisag reminded Sandoval of their supposed meeting last year, the justice said: "I deny that I talked to you."

This prompted Saguisag to say: "Let me refresh your memory. You wanted to see Mayor Atienza about your appointment. You also asked for my help, but I said 'there's nothing I can do.'"

Saguisag added: "It was during office hours when you wanted to see the city mayor to boost your bid."

At one point, Saguisag went ballistic when Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio stood up to argue his point.

"I have the floor. *Hintay ka. Sabat ka nang sabat* (You wait. You're interrupting me)," he barked at Villa-Ignacio.

At this point De Castro decided to call for a recess. Defense and prosecution lawyers were then called to her office.

After 30 minutes, the session was resumed but De Castro announced she was suspending yesterday's and Wednesday's hearings to give time for Sandoval's resignation to be resolved.

The special division is also set to resolve the motion of defense lawyers for Sandoval to recuse from the case, having allegedly lost his sense of independence when he accused his colleagues of flip-flopping.

RP credit rating cut by one notch

From page A1

heightened risks to the Philippines' credit rating due to lagging fiscal reforms and rising vulnerability to the inching up of global interest rates.

"S&P has now revised downward its expectations that the government will be able to raise tax receipts materially from their current low level of 12 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) and that the government's debt trajectory will move to a clearer downward trend," S&P's analyst Agost Benard said yesterday.

"With the public sector debt at 110 percent of GDP and government interest expense at nearly 40 percent of revenue, prompt passage of the government's fiscal plan was necessary to support the Philippines' ratings at their previous levels," he added.

Benard said that of the eight revenue measures proposed by Malacañang, only the excise tax on tobacco and alcohol products had been passed. But he said this was even a "watered down" version.

He warned that half of the government's debt was in foreign currency, thus limiting fiscal managers' room to maneuver in case of rising global interest rates and the weakening of the peso.

Sigh of relief

An analyst said the debt markets would greet the news of the downgrade with "a sigh of relief."

"You had a lot of sell-side hype that it could be a two-notch downgrade, and this removes that uncertainty," said Tim Condon, head of Asian Financial Market Research at ING Financial Markets in Singapore.

"It's in line with our expectations, a one-notch cut and a stable outlook, so this is good news in that it removes part of the ratings action overhang on the bonds. People can now concentrate on what is a booming year for the Philippine economy, which is translating into some progress on the public finances," he said.

Asked if the downgrade was likely to effect the performance of Philippine dollar bonds, Condon said: "There could be a knee-jerk reaction to sell, but I suspect that many people share our view that the economic fundamentals are improving and will look to buy on dips.

Joseph Tan, a regional economist at Standard Chartered Bank, also in Singapore, said a two-notch downgrade would have been immensely negative.

"We would expect this cut to have some negative impact on the peso, but the damage will be fairly well-contained given the market was expecting a two-notch downgrade," Tan said.

At a press briefing, Buenaventura said he was surprised that S&P's downgrade came out prior to a formal review.

"This will probably have an impact on Moody's rating unless we come closer to our target before they finalize their review," Buenaventura said.

"We need to work twice as hard to show that we will in fact be able to do what we say we'll do," he said, referring to the government's commitment to raise yearly P80 billion in fresh revenues from new tax measures.

He said the downgrade was a reaction to "a perceived no action on our part" to pass the much-needed tax revenues.

The Department of Finance said the S&P downgrade was unfair, saying the country did not deserve the lower rating because of "developments" on the fiscal front.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said the decision of S&P was a surprise, considering that it was scheduled to send a mission to the Philippines in February.

She said that without S&P's mission coming to the country, the ratings agency seemed to have based its decision on "baseless" speculations that the government's fiscal reform agenda was not progressing.

Amatong said the administration's value-added tax (VAT) plan—consisting of raising the VAT from 10 to 12 percent, and the lifting of exemptions for several sectors—would generate substantial revenues for the government. DOF estimates said the twin VAT proposals could generate as much as P60 billion in additional revenues a year.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said she had "expected" the downgrade although she had been hoping that the improved fiscal position at the end of 2004 would have helped avert it.

She reported that the government was able to keep its budget deficit way below the deficit target of P198 billion in 2004.

Apparently, Boncodin said, the rating agency was looking for a "more dramatic and sustained trend."

Malacañang expects Standard and Poor's to bring the Philippines credit rating back to plus territory within the next six months.

"We are confident that S&P will revisit our rating and consider reversing the downward action once they have a complete understanding of the government's significant achievements to raise revenues and contain the future impact of NPC (National Power Corp.) losses through successful privatization and rate increases," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

To convince S&P to upgrade the country's credit rating, Bunye said Congress should pass new tax measures, revenue collection agencies should improve their performance, and the National Power Corp. should complete the sale of its transmission and other assets. *With a report from Reuters*

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'Aviator,' 'Sideways' gain . . .

From page A1

der Payne and Jim Taylor.

Emotional Foxx

The emotional highlight of the rites held at the International Ballroom was provided by a winner from another movie, "Ray." Jamie Foxx, named Best Actor, Drama, for his note-perfect impression of music legend Ray Charles, was the evening's best-applauded awardee. After the standing ovation that greeted his victory—with spontaneous applause to the beat of a song from the "Ray" soundtrack—Foxx started his acceptance spiel like the comedian he originally was, chanting "ohhhh ... ahhhh" with the audience. Just like the late Charles.

Foxx said Charles told him: "Life is [like] notes right underneath our fingers. All you got to do is take the time to play the right notes." He praised his director, Taylor Hackford, "a Caucasian man taking a chance on this beautiful black film."

Tears welled in his eyes as he thanked his maternal grandmother, Esther Talley, a domestic worker who adopted him when he was seven months old. He cited her for inspiring him.

In an earlier interview, Foxx told the INQUIRER that when he was a boy, he resented his grandmother for keeping the money that people gave him. But when he went to college, Foxx said, she surprised him by giving all the money back.

DiCaprio was subdued in his acceptance of his Best Actor, Drama award for portraying pioneer aviator and filmmaker Howard Hughes. He described working with Scorsese, whom Eastwood defeated in the Best Director race, as "the pinnacle" of his "growing up in this business." He urged the audience of the Golden Globe telecast—among NBC's highest-rating special event programs—"to keep contributing to the (aid for victims of the) recent tsunami disaster."

Peak moment

The evening's other peak moment was dished out by Robin Williams, who earlier introduced his family, including his Filipino-Finnish-American wife, Marsha Garces Williams, to the INQUIRER on the red carpet line. Williams received one of HFPA's most important honors, the Cecil B. DeMille Award. Previous recipients include Laurence Olivier, Al Pacino, Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra and Paul Newman.

After good-naturedly ribbing the association members, Williams thanked the group for "acknowledging" comedy. "You allow us to be in the room with the adults," he said.

Williams saved his last thanks for his friend and college roommate, the late actor Christopher Reeve. "I miss you," he said. "May flights of angels send [thee] to thy rest, sweet prince."

After the standing ovation he received for his Best Director triumph, Eastwood was equally generous in his praise for the "Million Dollar Baby" cast, calling Morgan Freeman "the world's greatest actor."

In turn, Eastwood was the main subject of Swank's thank-you speech: "You have such a huge heart and you just envelop all the people around you with it. You guided us so brilliantly. You composed [the film's score, for which Eastwood also received a nomination] and produced [the movie]. Your talents are without limits."

Eastwood's win was made sweeter by the presence onstage of her daughter, Kathryn Eastwood. As Miss Golden Globe 2005, the 16-year-old aspiring actress helped hand out the trophies.

Bening's heroes

Annette Bening, like DiCaprio, was composed in her victory remarks, even as she tightly clutched her Golden Globe statuette for Best Actress, Musical or Comedy. She won for her interpretation of a stage diva in "Being Julia."

For a little while, Bening became a bit emotional when she declared: "I want to dedicate this to my brother and my sister-in-law, Brad and Billy Bening. You're my heroes."

And then, with a smile and a nod to her husband, actor-director Warren Beatty, Bening quipped, "The lunch at the pizza joint was delicious."

The awards show began with a surprise: back-to-back Best Supporting Actor honors for Natalie Portman and Clive Owen, co-stars of "Closer," Mike Nichols' adaptation of Patrick Marber's play.

The tsunami relief effort, first mentioned by DiCaprio, was subsequently mentioned several times more. HFPA, a non-profit organization, donated $250,000 to the tsunami aid drive and urged movie companies to do their share.

A surprise video clip of former President Bill Clinton echoed the sentiment, appealing to the show's live and telecast audience to contribute to the relief fund.

In the television categories, biggest winners were HBO's "The Life and Death of Peter Sellers" and ABC's "Desperate Housewives." "Peter Sellers" scored with Best Actor (Geoffrey Rush in the lead role) and Best Miniseries or Movie Made for TV. "Housewives" was Best Series, Musical or Comedy and one of its leads, Teri Hatcher, won Best Actress.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, January 18, 2005
2nd week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Heb 6:10-20
Gospel: Mark 2:23-28

One sabbath he was walking through grainfields. As his disciples walked along with him, they began to pick the heads of grain and crush them in their hands. Then the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look! they are doing what is forbidden on the sabbath!"

And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did in his time of need, when he and his men were very hungry? He went into the house of God when Abiathar was High Priest and ate the bread of offering, which only the priests are allowed to eat, and he also gave some to the men who were with him." Then Jesus said to them, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. So the Son of Man is master even of the sabbath."

Commentary

Everything that Jesus does is used to teach, to provoke and to re-examine our behavior and ideas about what is religious. As they walk along they pick grain on the Sabbath, technically an infringement of the law. But Jesus knows his scripture! And reminds them of David who did something far more shocking—he took the grain from the storehouses of the priests on the Sabbath so that his men would have something to eat! Jesus is point blank blunt—the sabbath and the law is to serve to make life more livable for human beings and not to oppress them. His interpretations of the law are based on compassion, on need of others and on the truth that is the bedrock foundation of the law.

How do we interpret and obey the law—to honor and worship God alone, not just on the sabbath, but every day of the year? How completely do we love our neighbor—every single man, woman and child, especially those in most jeopardy and need who is our neighbor? Are we always trying to ignore the underlying reality of the law so that we don't have to do anything more than a shallow understanding of it?

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE)—Certiorari under Rule 65—The rationale of the Court of Appeals in dismissing the petition is quite simple. Petitioner should have appealed the decision of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Lanao Del Norte to the Office of the President pursuant to the Local Government Code. Since appeal was available, resort to filing a petition for certiorari, prohibition and mandamus with the Court of Appeals under Rule 65, was inapt. The essential requisites for a petition for certiorari under Rule 65 of the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure are (1) the writ is directed against a tribunal, a board, or an officer exercising judicial or quasi-judicial functions; (2) such tribunal, board, or officer has acted without or in excess of jurisdiction; or with grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction; and (3) there is no appeal or any plain, speedy, and adequate remedy in the ordinary course of law. The existence and availability of the right of appeal proscribes a resort to certiorari, because one of the requirements for availment of the latter remedy is precisely that there should be no appeal. [Citations omitted.] [Resolution, Justice Chico-Nazario, Second Division, Balindong vs Dacalos, G. R. No. 158874, November 10, 2004]

BY R. B. VERA

AFP: JI members still training locals

By Alcuin Papa

MORE than 30 foreign members of the Jemaah Islamiyah are operating in the country training local terrorists for attacks against the government, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said yesterday.

The military also hinted that top Abu Sayyaf leader Khaddafy Janjalani could still be alive and well in Mindanao.

"As of the end of 2004, the number of JI members in Mindanao was placed at 33," the military said in a report, adding that this was seven less than in 2003. The number comprised 32 Indonesians and one Malaysian who were "expected to continue exploiting local Muslim secessionist rebels by sharing their demolition skills."

The terror group was also said to be in possession of 21 assorted firearms "utilized mainly for training purposes."

The strength of the Abu Sayyaf Group, the JI and the communist New People's Army decreased in 2004 because of the military's "successes" in its internal security operations, according to an assessment at last Saturday's AFP command conference at Camp Aguinaldo.

In the case of the Abu Sayyaf, the AFP said its strength was reduced from 479 members in 2003 to 425 last year. The ASG's firearms also decreased from 398 in 2003 to 378 last year.

The AFP said the neutralization of a number of key ASG leaders, including Hamsiraji Sali on April 8, 2004, also forced its leaders to seek refuge in places outside their traditional areas of operation.

The military also hinted that the top ASG leader Janjalani could still be alive after his presence, as well as that of other top ASG leaders, was monitored in the Lanao provinces, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat and Tawi-Tawi.

Earlier reports said Janjalani was killed in November in a military attack on the ASG in the Liguasan Marsh in Maguindanao.

The AFP said the NPA's strength went down from 8,892 fighters in 2003 to 8,240 last year. Some 7,659 rebels or 93 percent are loyal to the Communist Party of the Philippines headed by Jose Ma. Sison. However, the number of firearms in the hands of the NPA increased from 6,133 in 2003 to 6,162 last year.

The CPP-NPA also managed to collect a total of P126 million last year from "extortion activities," a 34-percent increase over 2003 figures. Almost half of the amount or P56 million was collected from candidates during the May 10 elections. The AFP admitted that the total amount could be higher because of many unreported cases of extortion.

Finally, AFP public information chief Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual said the strength of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front decreased from 12,081 men in 2003 to 11,099 last year. Firearms in the possession of the MILF also decreased from 8,757 in 2003 to 8,166 last year.

The government and the MILF are set to return to the negotiating table in February in Malaysia.

With AFP

Ex-La Salle professor belies terrorist tag

By Christian V. Esguerra

ME, a terrorist?

A wealthy former De La Salle University professor yesterday expressed surprise at being on the Philippine National Police's list of suspected terrorists.

Yusuf Ledesma was linked to a purported plot by Islamic converts to assassinate President Macapagal-Arroyo last year, according to a 10-page report by the PNP's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group dated Jan. 3, 2005.

The report was apparently prepared three days before the CIDG arrested 17 suspected terrorists in a raid on the Islamic Information Center on Taft Avenue, Manila.

Fifteen of those arrested were subsequently freed for lack of evidence, while the two who were charged are out on bail.

Ledesma said he got hold of a copy of the report titled "Case Operation Plan Green Archer" from Rep. Mujib Hataman (party-list Anak Mindanao). He said Hataman would make the report public tomorrow during a congressional inquiry into the raid on the Islamic center.

"I'm angry. I can't believe I'm suspected of being a terrorist," Ledesma told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Ledesma heads the Balik Islam Unity Congress, a group of Islamic converts formed amid the controversy surrounding the arrest of several of their comrades early last year.

Ledesma said he taught at La Salle from 1999 to 2001, handling subjects on political economy and research methods. He said he was also a lecturer at the University of Massachusetts from 1989 to 1995. He said he would return to the American university sometime this year to defend his dissertation for a doctorate degree in economics.

But according to the report prepared by CIDG officer-in-charge Rodolfo "Boogie" Mendoza, Ledesma allegedly provided the funds for the assassination of President Arroyo.

Ledesma allegedly "provided an unspecified amount to Ahmad Santos sometime in April 2004 for the purchase of C4 and other related bombing implements," the report said.

"The C4 and other bombing implements were then purchased from unidentified sources by a certain Abdul Samad Escobar of Tanza, Cavite."

The report also identified Ledesma as a "wealthy radical Balik Islam (Islamic convert)."

Ledesma, an Islamic convert for four years now, said the report linking him to the plot was simply ridiculous.

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Cop in Aklan carnage had feared for his life

From page A1

In Manila, President Macapagal-Arroyo extended her "deepest sympathy" to the victims of the Kalibo carnage and ordered the Philippine National Police to tighten rules on the recruitment of new personnel.

"We are leaving the investigation of the case to the police but if the incident was really a result of the mental instability of the assailant as reported, then we expect the leadership of the PNP to review and enforce stricter guidelines and standards in the recruitment of new police officers," Ms Arroyo said on dzRH.

Committee formed

PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay formed a six-man committee that would facilitate the nationwide tests and investigate the incident.

The mandatory tests will include all police officers, from Aglipay down to the lowest street cop.

Fearful wife, mother

Besides the tests, the committee, headed by Chief Supt. Nicolas Pasinos, will try to determine what drove Moreño to go on a shooting spree and kill even his boss, Aklan provincial chief Odelardo Magayanes.

Hitzhel and her mother-in-law Nimfa, a barangay health worker, asked authorities to help bring home Moreño's body, saying they were afraid to go to Aklan owing to the number of people he had killed there.

"My husband was not a violent person and did not show any signs of becoming one," said Hitzhel, who lives in Purok Sampaguita, Barangay Poblacion in Toboso, about 110 km northeast of Bacolod.

Nimfa said: "We just want the body of my son back in Toboso but we are afraid to go to Aklan."

Besides Magayanes, also killed in the bloodbath were Chief Insp. Manuel Ilejay Jr., police chief of the capital town of Kalibo, three policemen and a 10-year-old girl.

Moreño was gunned down by responding policemen.

Death threats

Aklan police said they were focusing their investigation on alleged death threats received by Moreño from a group supposedly linked to suspected drug lord Jose Kim "Boy" Cuadra.

Chief Supt. George Aliño, Western Visayas police chief, said Moreño feared for his life after he became a vital witness in the case against Cuadra.

Cuadra was allegedly the top drug lord in Western Visayas. He was caught by Moreño and another policeman supposedly in possession of shabu in April 2003 at the Caticlan airport after vacationing in Boracay.

"There is a big possibility that the threats were from Cuadra's group because it happened only after Cuadra was apprehended," Aliño told the INQUIRER.

Abortive transfer

He said police would also investigate if Moreño had violent tendencies and if he had quarreled with his fellow policemen, family and superiors.

Aliño has designated Senior Supt. Ramon Cariño as the acting provincial police director and Insp. Jose Gonzales as acting Kalibo police chief.

Moreño supposedly so feared for his life that he asked to be transferred to Toboso town to be with his family.

His uncle, Insp. Alan Libre, former Toboso police chief, said his transfer was supposedly to have taken effect on Jan. 16.

Hitzhel said her husband had planned to go home to Toboso yesterday to sell sugarcane, a business he did on the side to augment their income.

Cuadra denied that he had threatened Moreño.

"I do not understand why I'm being implicated. I have nothing to do with the incident or why he did it," Cuadra told the INQUIRER in an interview at his jail cell in Kalibo.

He said it was impossible for him to threaten the policeman because all his phone calls were screened and those allowed to visit him were only his wife Carmen, his children and close friends.

"If I pressured or threatened him, why did he not kill me instead? Maybe he shot his officers because they were pressuring him. Maybe they had disagreements," said Cuadra.

'Come and get me'

Cuadra said he would have thanked Moreño if the policeman had killed him instead.

"I'm tired of my situation here so to those who want to kill me, come and get me," he said.

Supt. Rolen Balquin, regional officer of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency in Western Visayas, confirmed that Moreño was a vital witness in the prosecution of Cuadra.

Sources at the PDEA said Moreño was allegedly offered P500,000 to retract his statements in connection with the arrest of Cuadra. The sources did not specify where the offer had come from.

The claim could not be verified independently.

Balquin said Moreño had already testified on the charges of illegal possession of prohibited drugs paraphernalia against Cuadra.

Moreño, described by people who knew him as "loving, responsible and funny," was the second of seven children of a barangay health worker and a carpenter in Toboso.

The families of those killed were still in shock.

At the Funeraria Sampaton, Gino Magayanes, 9, the youngest of three children of the slain police chief slumped in a chair, covered his face with his hands and cried after seeing his father's remains. His mother Ramona was also in tears. *With reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana and Christian V. Esguerra*

Recto slams unfair tax structure

From page A1

"Yet, the (IPPs) had gross sales almost double the combined basic pay of those on the public payroll," he said.

"Percentage-wise, a public school teacher pays more in taxes than this profitable behemoth. Tell a teacher she will only pay an income tax of 2 percent and she will feel that she has won the lotto."

Recto pointed out that the ways and means committee uncovered that the biggest IPP in terms of sales, which a study by the finance department failed to identify, declared gross sales of P131.7 billion in 2003, but paid only P2.8 billion in taxes (a tax burden of 2.16 percent).

The second "most profitable IPP in the DOF study" sold P23.7 billion worth of electricity that year but paid only P254 million in taxes, or a tax burden of only 1.07 percent, he said.

The senator said that when a company earns P23 billion a year, "but forks out a measly one percent of that amount to the government in taxes, then there's something wrong in the way we tax firms in this business."

Informed about the IPPs' low taxes, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said the IPPs seemed to have been a "vast conspiracy" from the very beginning to siphon money from ordinary citizens into the pockets of "high Malacañang and other officials and very influential merchants."

She noted that the "notorious" IPP contracts were awarded during the term of President Fidel Ramos.

Saying this situation must change, Santiago said she was preparing a resolution addressed to the Office of the Ombudsman to prosecute IPP owners who were responsible for the drastic increase in power rates.

"These IPPs have never served our country. They simply exploited a situation. When we needed electricity, they charged exorbitant rates, they bribed all the Napocor officials. Perhaps the bribes went all the way straight up to Malacañang, and they obtained not only concessionary arrangements from our government, but downright oppressive concessions like the extremely low taxes that they're paying compared to others similarly situated," she said.

VAT increase

Recto mentioned the low taxes paid by the IPPs to justify the reluctance of the administration bloc in the Senate to increase the value-added tax rate from the present 10 to 12 percent.

Although the projected tax take of the proposed VAT increase would reach P50.17 billion yearly, Sen. Manuel Villar, chair of the Senate finance committee, thumbed it down because the measure would further burden taxpayers.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday allayed fears that her proposal in Congress to increase the VAT would nudge the prices of basic commodities higher.

Prices of basic commodities go up not because of taxes but because of external factors such as higher oil prices due to international wars and high world market prices due to strong demand from major countries such as China, according to Ms Arroyo. *With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Bohol sea wolves turn into shepherds

From page A1

that is home to about 250 families, hunted whales, whale sharks, dolphins and manta rays for as long as their parents could remember.

Whale sharks, the world's largest fish that grow up to 15 tons, were easy pickings because they tended to be docile and did not fight back.

In 1998, life on the island turned upside down with a nationwide whaling ban. Boats were impounded, driving some fishermen to penury.

"One day the whalers knocked on my door armed with machetes and threatened to kill me," said Joselino Baritua, a conservationist who had been sent by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to Pamilacan several months earlier to convince the islanders to give up their practice.

The whalers at first rejected the idea of becoming tourist guides of the high seas in the novel eco-tourism business of whale-watching.

"We thought about breaking the law because it's our livelihood," said the 30-year-old Joseph Valeroso, who served as an apprentice on a whale boat at 13.

Whale sharks and various giant sea mammals converge on the Bohol Sea off Pamilacan between January and April, feeding on millions of plankton, tiny shrimp as well as anchovies and schools of other small fish that spawn in the area.

Once 18-meter-long diesel boats with six-member hunting crews sortied daily from Pamilacan, named after the huge gaff with which they spear and land their giant quarry, and its beaches turned red where the animals were quartered in open-air abattoirs.

Whale shark meat prices shot up with insatiable demand from nearby Asian countries. By 1997 the biggest catch was sold for up to P120,000 ($2,135).

"Sometimes my crew caught four whale sharks in a day," said Tito Valeroso.

"You don't feel any pity at all because you also need to eat," he told Agence France Presse.

Eventually, though, about 100 families signed on to the whale-watching tours, induced by a three-year, $150,000 grant from a US bank that opened its deep pockets to the "Save the Whales" cause.

Baritua, now 37, quit the WWF to personally manage the new enterprise.

About 2,000 tourists took the tours last year, augmenting the former whalers' meager incomes from regular fishing.

"We have whaler guides for up to 100 tourists a day," said Baritua.

But some resort operators and travel agencies from nearby Bohol island now run their own whale-watching boat tours and the bypassed former whalers are livid.

"We tell these independent operators, 'If you insist on doing this, the people of Pamilacan would go back to killing whales and dolphins until you have nothing left to show the tourists,'" Baritua said.

Despite their eco-friendly undertaking, the Valerosos confess to missing the taste of whale and dolphin meat.

"Dolphin meat tastes like beef. Bryde's whales taste like prime beef," Joseph Valeroso said. "Whale shark meat is like pork. They catch fire on the grill because of the fat." *AFP*

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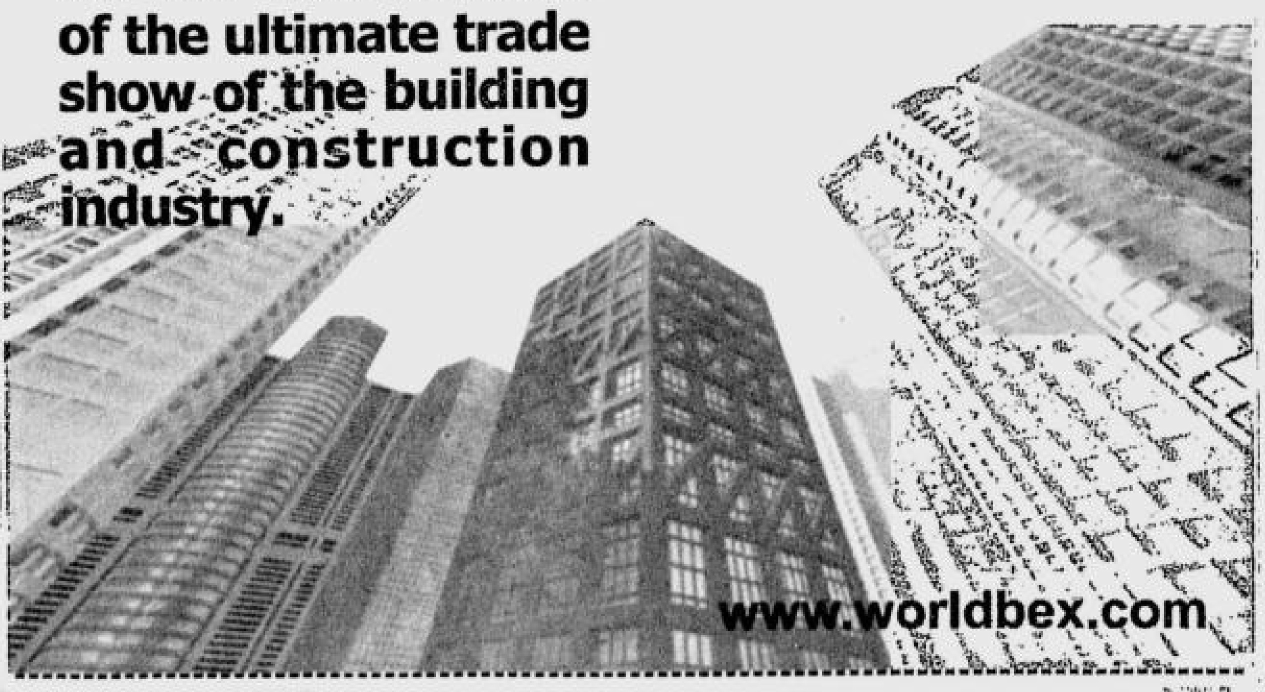

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Nene: Hard to tell when Erap …

From page A1

and serious statements coming from him, so we don't really know what is what," Pimentel said, referring to recent remarks by deposed President Joseph Estrada.

"Therefore, if he insists that it was a joke, we should take it as a joke," Pimentel said, bursting into laughter in an interview at his Senate office.

Blowing hot and cold, Estrada defended President Macapagal-Arroyo last week against allegations that she had violated the Constitution by allowing him to seek medical treatment in Hong Kong and was, therefore, impeachable.

Soon after, on his return home, he attacked corruption in government and vowed to carry on the fight of his friend, the late actor Fernando Poe Jr.

At one point, Estrada insinuated that the INQUIRER might suffer the same fate as the ABS-CBN network, whose mobile van was torched allegedly by Poe's supporters for its supposed unfair reporting—and then later said he was only joking.

"Erap must have a clear direction and ideological position on the things that affect the lives of the people," said Pimentel.

Gov't blunders

The veteran senator said it would be "difficult to unify the opposition on the basis of hatred" of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Pimentel brushed aside speculation that the opposition was involved in a plot to destabilize the government.

The real threat was not Estrada but the administration's "own blunders," he said.

"It's going to be the overall economic burdens of the people that will cause a massive resentment against the administration that can erupt into an unmanageable fury," Pimentel said.

"This is what they should be worried about—hardships, prices of basic commodities spiraling, the prices of light and water going up, transportation (fare hikes)."

Pimentel dissociated himself from the "committee of 5" formed by some of Estrada's political allies to unify opposition forces. He said he would be more effective doing his work in the Senate.

"I can articulate the position of the opposition within the halls of the Senate. At my age, I would want to suggest that there should be a division of labor," he said.

Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos, at a press forum, squelched speculation that the committee's aim was to topple Ms Arroyo.

"This is not a shadow government. It's not designed to overthrow the administration," the daughter of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos said.

She said the committee's main job was to draw up an "alternative agenda" of socioeconomic reforms based on grass-roots consultations, touching on such problems as the rising cost of electricity, inefficient collection of taxes and a ballooning budget deficit.

"We will propose a common agenda that no administration can reject, and that the people will judge. They will judge for themselves who is right, who is nationalistic and who is pro-Filipino," she said.

Purge the moles

"We need to be serious about this work because we can't go on criticizing and politicking," she said.

But Marcos said the immediate, urgent task facing Estrada was "cleaning the ranks of the opposition and finding out who is the genuine opposition member."

"Some are saying that there are some spies, traitors [in our ranks]," she said.

"It's incumbent upon President Estrada to … find those who are committed, dedicated, upright and determined to pursue the goals of the opposition."

Marcos said "infestation" was the biggest obstacle in attaining a solid and strong opposition.

"President Estrada as the focal person of the fragmented groups would be in the best position to … unmask individuals who only want to join the opposition to promote their selfish ends," she said.

Look who's talking

She said that unless the moles and hitchhikers were booted out, they would continue to weigh down the opposition and work from inside to block real unification, sowing intrigue by pitting one faction against another.

Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras said that Marcos should be the first to be kicked out of the opposition.

"Imee should shut up because she herself is a member of the *sigurista* group (those who don't take chances) in the opposition," a visibly irked Paras told the INQUIRER.

"She can't even stand up to raise the question of a quorum in the House of Representatives whenever I ask her to do so. Why? She's afraid that the government might run after their ill-gotten wealth. Isn't it that her mother was a visitor in Malacañang?" he said.

Spain law groups ask SC to spare Osmeña scion

By Philip C. Tubeza

THREE Spanish bar associations have asked the Philippine Supreme Court to spare the life of a scion of the influential Osmeña clan of Cebu who was sentenced to death for the rape-slay of two sisters in 1997.

In three separate *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs, the bar associations of Madrid, Barcelona and the Basque Region asked the high court to spare Francisco Juan "Paco" Larrañaga, a Spanish citizen and great-grandson of the late President Sergio Osmeña and nephew of Sen. Sergio Osmeña III and Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña.

The three bar associations said the evidence and "procedural lapses" in the case showed that Larrañaga should not be executed.

Larrañaga was one of the seven young men convicted of the rape-slay of sisters Jacqueline, 23, and Marie Joy Chiong, 20, in Cebu City in 1997.

Lawyer Sandra Marie-Coronel, Larrañaga's counsel, asked the Supreme Court yesterday to accept the briefs after the Spanish consul tried but failed to submit them through diplomatic channels.

"With the greatest respect for the law and judicial system of the Philippines, the Barcelona Bar Association wishes to state its deep concern at the sentencing to death of a Spanish citizen in the said country, not only on account of the profound conviction that the death penalty is not a civilized response to crime, but also because in view of the documentation provided, irreparable harm could be caused," said the Barcelona bar.

"If the evidence were to be reviewed, a breach of procedural safeguards could be found which would invalidate the proceedings," it said.

The Basque Bar Council noted that 35 witnesses had stated under oath that Larrañaga was in Quezon City and not in Cebu when the Chiongs were abducted on July 16, 1997.

It said that there was no "physical evidence" to link Larrañaga to the crime and that the late Judge Martin Ocampo, who heard the case, prohibited the defense lawyer from properly examining the prosecution's witnesses.

Ocampo had also barred defense witnesses—who had claimed they were with Larrañaga in a Quezon City bar at the time the crime was committed—from testifying, it added.

The council also said that Ocampo was "not impartial" and "hurled insinuations on the personal qualities" of the defense witnesses. It noted that the judge even had the defense lawyer jailed for 10 days for seeking his inhibition from the case.

The Madrid Bar said Larrañaga's death sentence "would suppose unequal treatment, against the principle of reciprocity in force in International Criminal Law," since no Filipino in Spain charged with the same crime would be meted out the death penalty.

Pro-land reform tiller fears NPA retribution

By Carlito Pablo

A 30-YEAR-OLD farmer from the Bondoc Peninsula in Quezon province has been in hiding for a year now for fear that communist-led New People's Army rebels might liquidate him and his family.

Dioscoro Tejino, his wife and four young children, the youngest of which is two years old, have been living mostly in Metro Manila with the support of nongovernment organizations.

On Jan. 18, the Tejino family will mark their first year in hiding.

Tejino's crime, according to Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales (party-list Akbayan), was that he was an advocate of the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, a land reform program which NPA rebels dismiss as bogus.

"I want to go back to our home. It has been one year," the soft-spoken Tejino said in a brief interview at the House of Representatives, which was arranged by Rosales' office.

"I don't know any other trade except farming," Tejino said.

Tejino has reason to fear liquidation by NPA rebels. His brother Reymundo was killed by the NPA on Feb. 4, 2003. Three other Akbayan members in the area have been killed allegedly by communist rebels from 1998 to 2004.

The Tejinos are members of Akbayan, a party-list group critical of the mainstream communist movement.

Rosales, chair of the House committee on human rights, said she was bringing the Tejino case to the government's peace panel negotiating with the National Democratic Front.

"We're writing a comprehensive brief to the GRP (Government of the Republic of the Philippines) to make it an issue in the peace talks," Rosales said.

Rosales said that at the very least, the rebels are violating the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Law.

The CAHRIL, an accord forged between the government and the NDF, prohibits the targeting of unarmed civilians in the conflict.

"The Tejino case reflects the fears on the ground being experienced by our grassroots organizations," Rosales said.

St. Joseph jubilee

ALL ALUMNI of St. Joseph Institute in Candon City, Ilocos Sur, are being called back to the school to celebrate its diamond jubilee on Jan. 24-26. For more information, alumni may contact Mayor Allen Singson at 077-742-6136 or Grace Singson at 02-931-1242. To confirm your attendance, ask for Vangie or Elvie.

Tarongoy kin turn to Sto. Niño for help

By Anthony S. Allada
PDI Mindanao Bureau

DAVAO CITY—The family and friends of abducted Filipino accountant Robert Tarongoy have turned to the Sto. Niño for help in obtaining his safe release from the hands of his Iraqi captors.

On Sunday morning, they held a "prayer walk" from the MacArthur Highway in Matina to Shrine Hills and offered a Mass on the feast of the Sto. Niño, the shrine's patron saint.

Tarongoy remains in the hands of his captors two months and 17 days after he was abducted on Nov. 1, 2004, in Baghdad.

His younger brother, Eugene, said the family was hopeful that Robert was still alive and that he would soon be freed with the efforts being exerted by Philippine negotiators led by Ambassador Rafael Seguis.

Eugene called on the Department of Foreign Affairs to do everything it could to get proof of life, whether in the form of a voice clip, handwritten letter or video footage.

But Overseas Workers Welfare Administration regional director Zenobia Caro said the Filipino negotiators were experiencing some difficulty right now because of Iraq's upcoming elections on Jan. 30.

Caro said the Tarongoy family should continue to be patient and keep up their daily prayer vigil for Robert's release.

She said personnel of the Owwa, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the City Social Service and Development Office continue to visit the Tarongoys for daily counseling and consultation.

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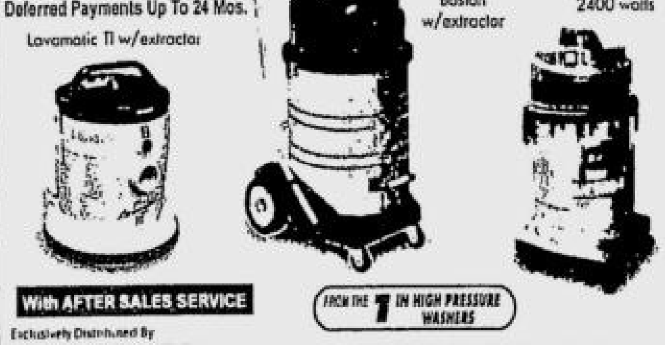

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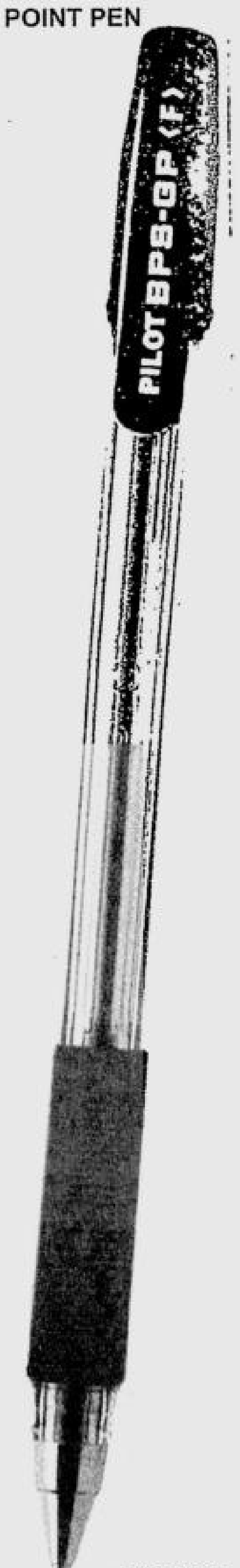

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Mag: US marking possible Iran targets

WASHINGTON—The United States has been conducting secret reconnaissance missions inside Iran to help identify potential nuclear, chemical and missile targets, The New Yorker magazine reported on Sunday.

The article, by award-winning reporter Seymour Hersh, said the secret missions have been going on at least since last summer with the goal of identifying target information for three dozen or more suspected sites.

Hersh quotes one government consultant with close ties to the Pentagon as saying, "The civilians in the Pentagon want to go into Iran and destroy as much of the military infrastructure as possible."

One former high-level intelligence official told The New Yorker, "This is a war against terrorism, and Iraq is just one campaign. The Bush administration is looking at this as a huge war zone. Next, we're going to have the Iranian campaign."

The White House said Iran is a concern and a threat that needs to be taken seriously. But it disputed the report by Hersh, who last year exposed the extent of prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

"We obviously have a concern about Iran. The whole world has a concern about Iran," Dan Bartlett, a top aide to President George W. Bush, told CNN's "Late Edition."

Of The New Yorker report, he said: "I think it's riddled with inaccuracies, and I don't believe that some of the conclusions he's drawing are based on fact."

Bartlett said the administration "will continue to work through the diplomatic initiatives" to convince Iran—which Bush once called part of an "axis of evil"—not to pursue nuclear weapons.

"No president, at any juncture in history, has ever taken military options off the table," Bartlett added. "But what President Bush has shown is that he believes we can emphasize the diplomatic initiatives that are under way right now."

Bush has warned Iran in recent weeks against meddling in Iraqi elections.

The former intelligence official told Hersh that an American commando task force in South Asia is working closely with a group of Pakistani scientists who had dealt with their Iranian counterparts.

The New Yorker reports that this task force, aided by information from Pakistan, has been penetrating into eastern Iran in a hunt for underground nuclear-weapons installations.

In exchange for this cooperation, the official told Hersh, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has received assurances that his government will not have to turn over Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb, to face questioning about his role in selling nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea. *Reuters*

Car bomb attack kills 7 in Iraq; 8 Iraqi soldiers shot

BAGHDAD—Insurgents detonated a suicide car bomb at police headquarters in the Iraqi town of Baiji on Monday, killing at least seven people, and shot dead eight Iraqi soldiers at a checkpoint in attacks ahead of the Jan. 30 polls.

Witnesses said burned bodies were scattered in the compound in Baiji, an oil refining town in the Sunni heartland north of Baghdad. The Baiji police chief said at least 15 people were wounded, mostly police.

Near Baquba, another guerrilla stronghold northeast of the capital, gunmen opened fire on a checkpoint and killed eight soldiers, a National Guard officer said.

Iraqi security forces have borne the brunt of insurgent attacks as the polls approach. Election officials have also been repeatedly targeted and threatened, and voting centers—many in schools—have been hit by insurgents.

Police in Basra said mortars were fired overnight at three schools in the city that will be used as voting centers. They said nobody was wounded.

Basra, Iraq's second-largest city, is in the mainly Shiite south of the country where support for the elections is strong.

Iraq's 60-percent Shiite majority expect the polls to cement their dominance in Iraqi politics after years of oppression during the rule of Saddam Hussein.

But many Sunni Arabs, who make up around 20 percent of Iraq's nearly 26 million people and from whom Saddam drew most of his ruling class, want the vote to be postponed.

AN IRAQI child looks at a US Army soldier conducting a foot patrol while looking for witnesses to an attack by insurgents on a convoy in the central Iraq area of Udaim Nahia Jan. 16.

REUTERS

Guerrilla violence and intimidation in Iraq's Sunni Arab heartland means that even many Sunnis who want to vote are too afraid to do so.

Several major Sunni Arab parties say they will boycott the polls after their calls for a delay were unheeded.

A series of attacks targeting Shiites in Iraq has raised concern that Sunni insurgents want to take advantage of sectarian disagreements over the election to try to provoke more conflict between the two communities.

Iraqi interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and the US government have insisted that the polls should go ahead, although they concede that some areas may be too unsafe for voting to take place.

The government says it is preparing a range of measures to protect voting stations, including a possible ban on traffic. *Reuters*

Iraqis in dangerous areas will also be allowed to register and vote on the same day, rather than having to pre-register.

US troop levels will be at their highest in Iraq over the election, at around 150,000. American soldiers are expected to form an outer line of defense while Iraqi security forces will guard polling stations. *Reuters*

Prince Harry's aides face quiz over Nazi gaffe

LONDON—The British lower house of parliament is to open an inquiry next month into the advisers of Prince Harry after he caused outrage by turning up at a fancy dress party in a Nazi uniform, the Times reported Monday.

The daily said the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons would probe how the aides of Prince Harry and his older brother Prince William were recruited.

"Where do they get these people who are advising Harry? They are either negligent, incompetent, politically suspect, or a combination of all three," committee member Ian Davidson of the ruling Labour party was quoted as saying.

Sir Michael Peat, who runs the private office of Prince Charles, the father of William and Harry, will be summoned to testify before the televised meeting of the committee from Feb. 7, the Times said.

The committee will also investigate the $29 million income generated every year for Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne, from his Duchy of Cornwall estate. The funds pay for 84 members of his staff.

Harry, 20, the grandson of Queen Elizabeth II, was last week photographed at a fancy dress party in a version of a Nazi Afrika Korps uniform, complete with swastika armband. *AFP*

COLD CHINA

A Chinese boy runs across a frozen river in Shangcai county, Henan province, in central China, in this picture taken Jan. 15. Cold winter weather continues to grip China with relief expected to come only in March.

REUTERS

Tsunami deaths surpass 175,000

GALLE, Sri Lanka—Sri Lanka's tsunami death toll shot up on Monday as officials said the more they cleared up, the more bodies they found.

The island added another 7,275 victims to its list of the dead, taking the national toll over 38,000 and the overall toll around Indian Ocean nations to 175,458.

"We are coming across dead bodies on a daily basis as we clear the rubble," said Tilak Ranavirajah, a senior public security ministry official.

Hardest-hit Indonesia has steadily raised its total, but Sri Lanka's body count had stabilized around 30,000 until Monday.

US Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz flew to the island to see the clean-up efforts in the southern port of Galle.

Sri Lanka said it would begin its tsunami reconstruction phase on Wednesday in the obliterated town of Hambantota.

"We were not prepared at all... to face a disaster like this," said President Chandrika Kumaratunga. "The people of this country faced it effectively, they are in a position to rebuild."

It is 22 days since a powerful earthquake off Indonesia's Sumatra island triggered the deadliest waves on record that hit more than a dozen countries from Asia to Africa.

Sri Lankans have now begun rebuilding tsunami-hit homes and hotels close to the shore, in defiance of a government ban.

"I'm worried about my family but I'm also worried about the future of my children. This is my business. How else will I protect and feed my children?" said Ranjith Premakumara, 28, rebuilding a guest house on its old foundations just 30 meters from the beach in the southern town of Paiyagala South.

In Thailand, Prime Minister Goran Persson of Sweden—which lost hundreds of people—visited a Buddhist temple turned mortuary with his Norwegian and Finnish counterparts, Kjell Magne Bondevik and Matti Vanhanen.

It houses hundreds of corpses from nearby Khao Lak resort, which forensics experts are trying to identify—crucial for families left without a body to grieve over.

"I'm impressed and I'm also extremely humbled because they're doing a very difficult job here under difficult circumstances," Persson said.

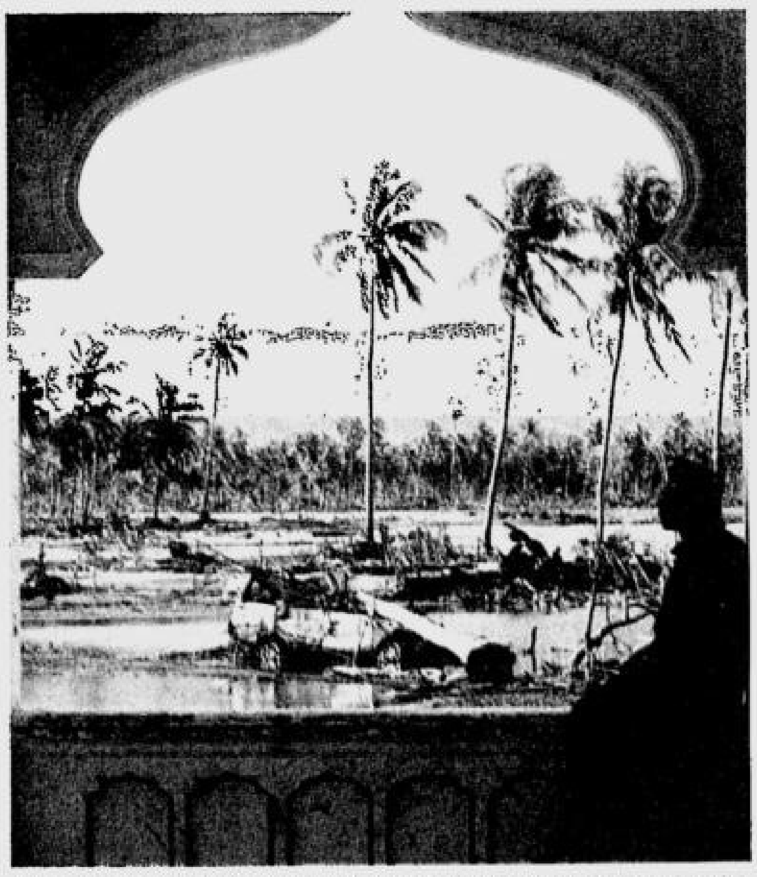
The trio was greeted by angry villagers demonstrating against Thai plans to move the mortuary and forensic operation from the temple to Phuket island, two hours drive to the south.

Nearly 2,000 Swedes are dead or unaccounted for. The tsunami looks set to be the greatest national tragedy in two centuries for a country that stayed neutral in the world wars.

Tens of thousands of bodies around the region may never be recovered, worsening the trauma.

In the Indian town of Seruthur, Lakshmi Kolandavelu refuses to believe her husband when he says their 2-year-old son, torn from her arms by the waves and missing, is dead and probably buried in a mass grave with three of his four siblings.

"We never found their bodies," she says, shaking her head. *Reuters*



A MAN gazes at the devastation wrought by the tsunami from inside a mosque in Kaju, Aceh province, Jan. 17. Foreign forces including the US Navy can continue tsunami relief operations in Indonesia beyond a March 26 deadline, Jakarta announced.

AFP

Airbus to unveil A380 'superjumbo'

PARIS—The A380 "superjumbo," which will be presented to the world in a lavish ceremony in southern France on Tuesday, will be profitable from 2008, its maker Airbus told the French financial newspaper La Tribune.

"You need to count another three years," Airbus chief Noel Forgeard told Monday's edition of the newspaper when asked when the break-even point of the 10-billion-euro-plus ($13-billion-plus) A380 program would come.

So far, 13 airlines have placed firm orders for 139 of the new planes, which can seat between 555 and 840 passengers and which have a catalogue price of between 263 and $286 million (200 and 218 million euros).

The break-even point is calculated to arrive when the 250th A380 is sold.

Airbus figures that, over the next two decades, more than 1,200 aircraft of the size of the A380 will be required for point-to-point routes in the world.

Forgeard said "we are well above our market plan," and added that his aim was to bring in two new airlines as customers each year.

Asked about China adding its airlines' names to the order sheet, Forgeard said he predicted a firm order would be soon forthcoming.

"I am extremely confident that the A380 will be bought by a Chinese company in the first half of this year," he said, without elaborating.

In December, Forgeard hinted that an agreement in principle had been signed with a Chinese airline for five A380s, and Britain's Sunday Times newspaper cited industry sources who said that had been firmed up into actual orders with an option for another five, and that Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific was preparing a similar order.

The Airbus chief told La Tribune there would be Chinese representatives at Tuesday's unveiling ceremony in Toulouse, "notably from the China Southern airline." *AFP*

Purged Chinese Communist Party reformist Zhao Ziyang dies at 85

ZHAO in a Jan. 11, 1984 photo at a reception in Washington. AP

BEIJING—Zhao Ziyang, the reformist Chinese Communist Party leader purged for opposing the 1989 military crackdown on the Tiananmen democracy movement, died Monday aged 85 after nearly 16 years under house arrest.

Zhao had been seriously ill in a Beijing hospital for a month with a lung problem and he fell into a coma on Friday after suffering a stroke. His death was confirmed in a short dispatch by China's official Xinhua news agency.

"Comrade Zhao Ziyang died of illness in a Beijing hospital Monday," said Xinhua.

Zhao's daughter Wang Yannan sent a short text-message to friends by mobile phone. "He left peacefully this morning, he is free at last," said the message.

"My heart-felt gratitude for everyone's concern and good wishes."

Zhao was unceremoniously stripped of his post of Communist Party secretary general after he opposed using military force to end the six-week-long student-led protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

He served as the head of the Communist Party and China's prime minister for much of the 1980s. After his removal from power, Zhao lived under house arrest in a tightly guarded compound in central Beijing.

Although the ruling Communist Party discredited his political reform plans, his economic reforms in the 1980s set the stage for the opening up of China's economy and 25 years of robust economic growth.

He had been handpicked by late patriarch Deng Xiaoping to become prime minister in 1980 after turning around the disastrous Maoist economic policies in the southwestern province of Sichuan.

Zhao was seen as an efficient technocrat, a realist who was not burdened by communist dogma.

"Zhao Ziyang was a great and enlightened Chinese leader," veteran dissident and democracy activist Ren Wanding said.

"He opposed military violence to resolve the 1989 democracy protests. A lot of Chinese leaders were unable to do this. This is where his greatness lies."

Ren and other activists called for an open and public funeral for Zhao.

"The Chinese government, at the very least, should have an open and public funeral for Zhao Ziyang," Jiang Peikun, whose 17-year-old son was gunned down in the streets of Beijing during the 1989 protest, said.

Jiang, whose wife Ding Zilin has campaigned for an overturning of the "counter-revolutionary" verdict on the 1989 protests, said he doubted the government would allow any public mourning.

Analysts have said the government would be concerned the death of Zhao could become a rallying point for disillusionment in Chinese society, especially over the growing gap between rich and poor.

However, on Tiananmen Square and around Zhao's house in central Beijing Monday security appeared normal and there were no open signs of unrest.

Zhao was last seen in public on May 19, 1989 with current Premier Wen Jiabao when he visited Tiananmen Square and tried to urge the students to leave the square. *AFP*

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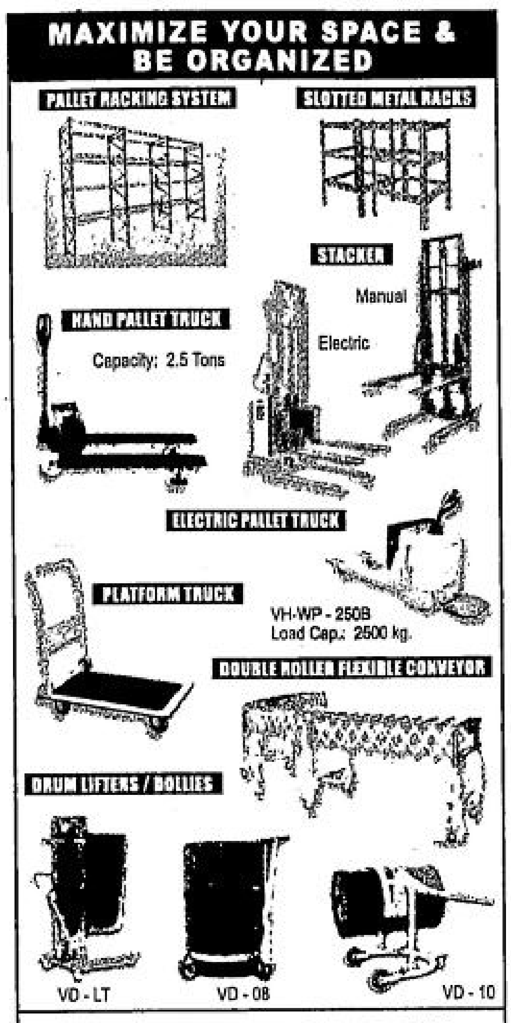

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Auschwitz survivors recall horror in 'death factory'

By Sabina Zawadzki

WARSAW—Jerzy Afanasjew's body tenses and his eyes close when he recalls the day he crawled out from the overcrowded cattle train as a 14-year-old boy to begin a six-month nightmare.

"What was Auschwitz? It was hell. Hell. A death factory," he says in a measured pace. "If you weren't gassed, you were exhausted to death, if you weren't exhausted to death, you starved, if you didn't starve, you died of disease."

Afanasjew is one of a dwindling group of people who, by chance or cunning, cheated death at Auschwitz, the biggest Nazi extermination camp during World War Two that has become the symbol of the Holocaust.

On Jan. 27, hundreds of survivors and dozens of world leaders will commemorate the 60th anniversary of the camp's liberation by the Soviet army and pay homage to the estimated 1.5 million people, mostly Jews, murdered there by the Nazis.

"Auschwitz is a place where we share the responsibility to remember the past with the goal of building a better society," said Abver Shalev, chair of Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust remembrance institute, who will attend the commemorations.

'Final solution'

Set up in 1940 by occupying Nazi forces near the town of Oswiecim in southern Poland as a labor camp for Poles, Auschwitz gradually became the centerpiece in Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler's "final solution" plan to exterminate Jews.

The scale of the industrialized killing at the camp, the cruelty of the guards and the pseudo-medical experiments conducted on prisoners by Nazi doctors have made Auschwitz synonymous with a coldly efficient genocide and total degradation of humanity.

Men, women and children —mostly Jewish, but Gypsies, Russians and Poles too—from Nazi-occupied Europe were taken to Auschwitz in overcrowded cattle trains. Many died of hunger and suffocation during the journey which usually lasted days.

Terrified, foul-smelling and starving, those who made the trip were often relieved at the prospect of fresh air and food.

They did not know that the smoke from nearby chimneys was coming from crematoria burning the bodies of earlier arrivals.

Illusions were quickly dispelled as the guards separated those capable of hard work from the elderly and children who were sent straight to the gas chambers—the process known in the camp as "selection."

Families were divided and many women who did not want to part with their small children were shot on the spot.

Those who survived the "selection," not knowing what happened to family and friends, were stripped of their clothes, belongings and identity. A number was tattooed on their arm and they were given a soup bowl and spoon.

Undressed, shaved

"They undressed us, shaved our heads and led us to a big hall with showers—the disinfection. I didn't recognize my mother... I still find this hard... Shaved. Naked," said Halina Elczewska, a Polish Jew who arrived in the summer of 1944.

Dressed in characteristic striped uniforms, the prisoners were then marched toward the labor camp under the gate adorned with giant inscription "Arbeit Macht Frei" (work sets one free) that came to symbolize the depth of Nazi cynicism.

The smell of burning corpses confirmed their worst suspicions as they gradually realized what fate met the others.

Crammed in bare wooden or brick barracks, prisoners worked 12-hour days in construction and factories. Better jobs were found in the kitchens or offices. They offered a chance to "organize"—steal—food and thus survive.

After sleepless nights and long hours of backbreaking work, the prisoners were forced outside to attend roll-calls which lasted for hours. Those who died were piled up next to the standing to be counted.

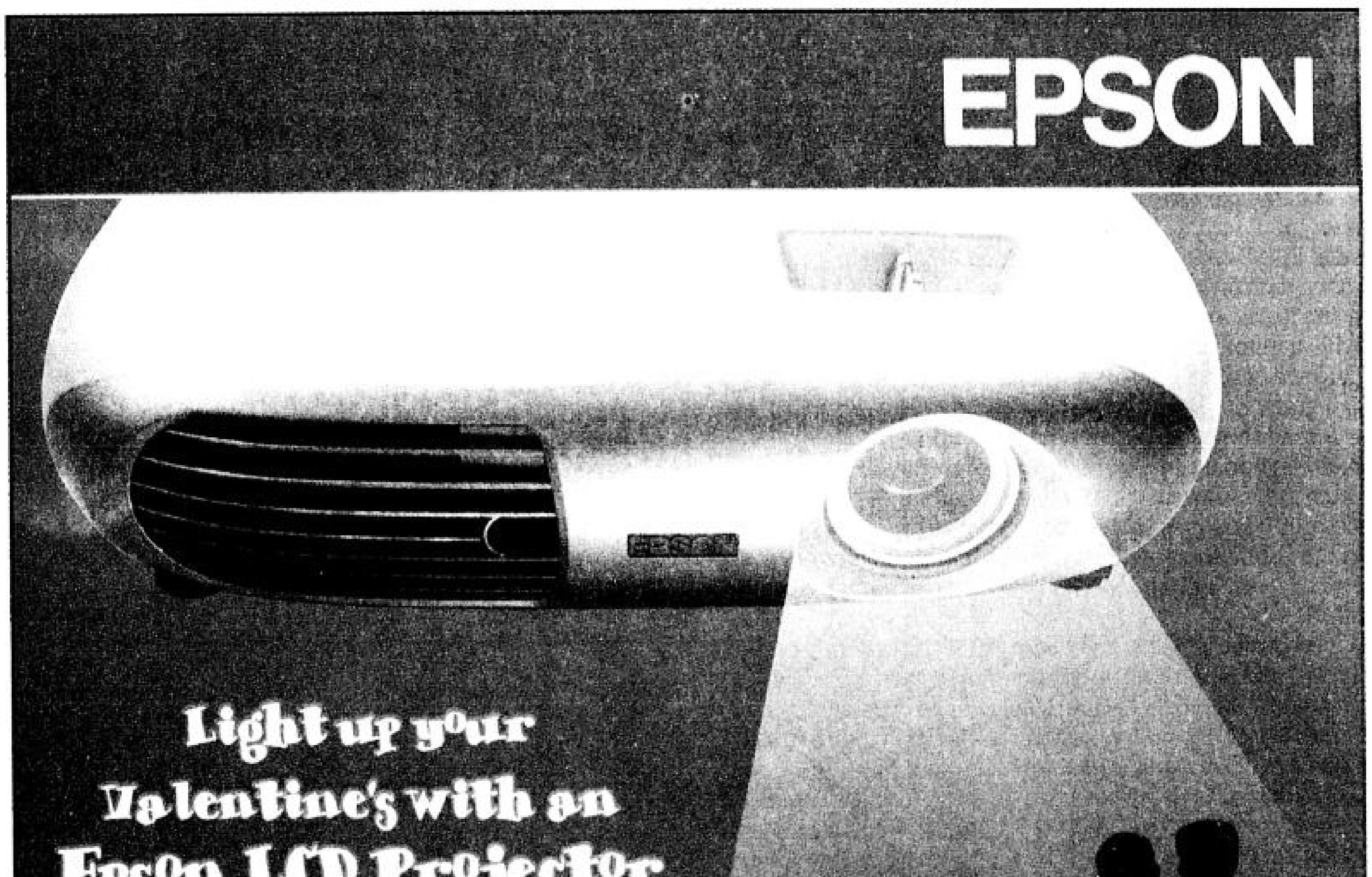
In the evening, drastic punishment for the slightest failure or simply a wrong gesture was meted out in what historians called a deliberate attempt to strip the inmates of their humanity.

"There was endless monotony, endless fear, endless roll call, endless shouts, endless beatings, endless smell of the burning flesh from the crematorium," said Afanasjew.

Compounded by epidemics, the death rate of prisoners was 19-25 percent a month in 1942-43.

Some prisoners, including Afanasjew, were subjected to experiments by Nazi doctors, led by the notorious Dr Josef Mengele who killed hundreds, seeking to prove theories of Ayryan supremacy.

And yet, among the misery, death and the struggle for survival, some inmates found the strength to help not just themselves. Stolen food would be shared and prisoners on their last legs hidden from further selections for the gas chambers. *Reuters*



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OPINION

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Looking up

EDITORIAL

THINGS are looking up for the economy, and unless something catastrophic occurs, 2005 should be a good year.

Last Wednesday the peso rallied to a five-month high against the US dollar, appreciating to the 55 to $1 level on a burst of positive local economic news and expectations of increased foreign investment inflows. Last Friday, the peso continued to gain ground against the dollar, closing at 55.67, up from Wednesday's 55.91.

The bull run of the stock market started late last year and was expected to continue this week, with investor sentiment being supported by the stronger peso, increased export earnings and improvement in the government's fiscal position. Share prices rose last week on better-than-expected November export figures and a steadier performance overnight on Wall Street.

Exports grew at their fastest rate in more than two years in the 12 months through November 2004, rising 19.5 percent on the back of increased electronic shipments. Economists however see an uncertain environment for Philippine exports this year because of an expected easing in the global demand for electronics which make up two-thirds of the country's exports.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas expects the country to attract more foreign portfolio investments or "hot money" this year. BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said some movement on key fiscal measures was convincing fund managers to put money in local investments. Investors, however, will monitor closely the development in the government's package of fiscal reforms, including several major tax bills in Congress.

A road show that started yesterday in Beijing and an international mining conference next month should attract interest in the mining industry in the Philippines. Trade Secretary Cesar A.V. Purisima said mining could become a major player in the national economy now that the industry has been given the green light to proceed with its investment promotion efforts.

The business community sees better prospects this year. Typical of the businessmen's sentiments are the views expressed by Raul Concepcion, consumer advocate, and Henry Schumacher, executive vice president of the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines. Concepcion predicted that "things will be better this year." But the President, he said, has to get her economic program and fiscal reforms going. Schumacher also sees better times ahead but stresses the need to address the fiscal problem decisively.

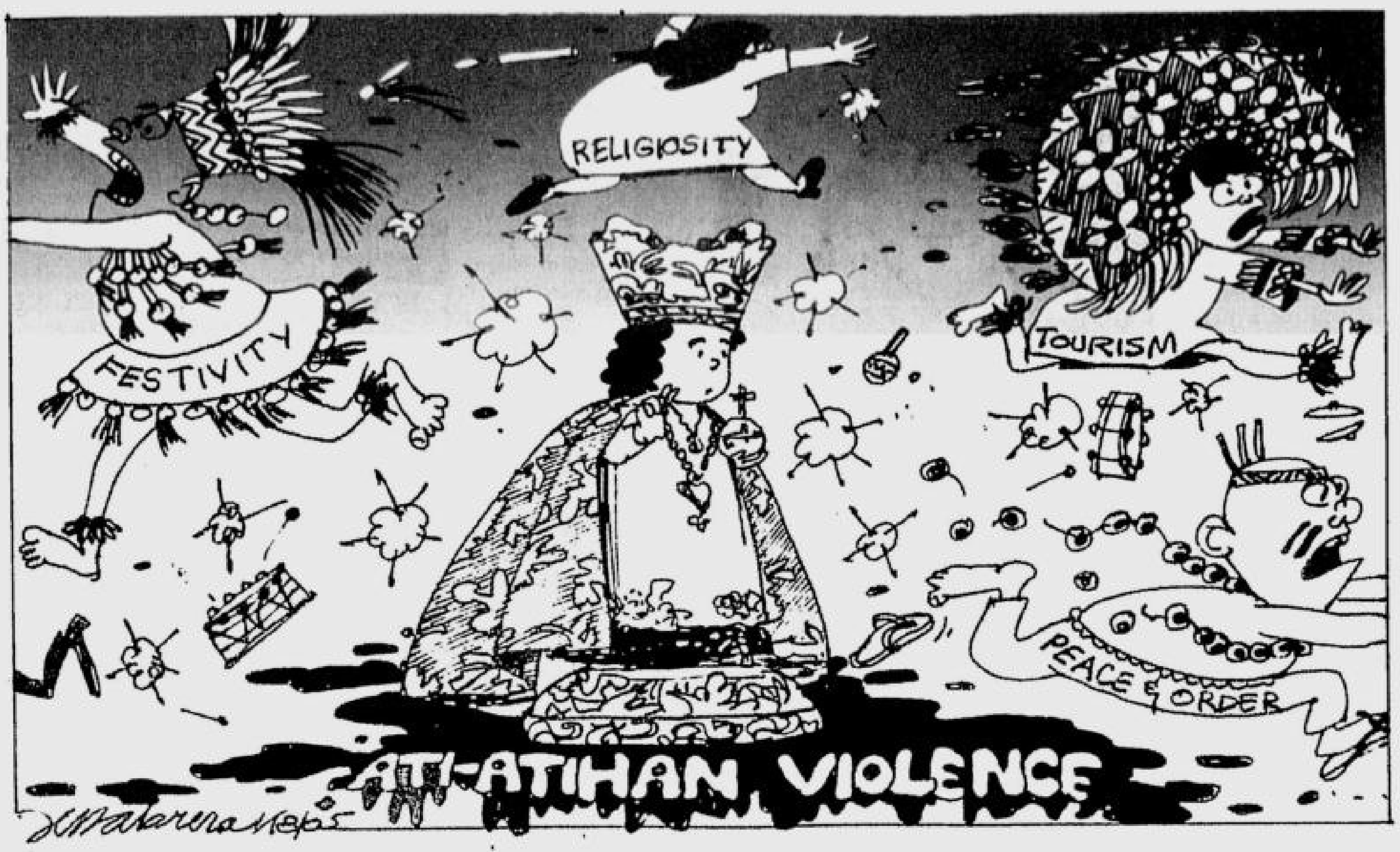
Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said there will be better times this year but this would be possible only with the adoption of fiscal reform measures and continued belt-tightening. She foresees an improvement in the government's fiscal position with the passage of the six tax measures that are expected to raise P50 billion in additional revenues. She also bases her optimistic forecast on a projected budget deficit of about P192 billion, which is lower than the target of P197.8 billion for this year.

Increased remittances from overseas Filipino workers should fuel greater activity in the economy, but only if a great part of the money is used for productive enterprises and not just for conspicuous consumption. The Department of Labor and Employment has said that last year's OFW remittances could reach $8.3 billion despite a minimal growth in workers' deployment. The government and the private sector have to get together to set up projects that would make the best use of the OFWs' remittances.

Another factor that could boost the economy is an expected increase in the number of tourists visiting the country this year as a result of the destruction by the tsunami disaster of tourist facilities in some South Asian countries last month.

On the security front, everything seems to be under control. Rumors of destabilization, coups or another Edsa event have remained rumors, and things are back to normal. We can only hope that political maneuverings will die down and that everybody will contribute their bit to insure national peace and stability, a factor that is crucial for economic growth to occur.

The executive branch will have to continue with its belt-tightening and fiscal reform measures. The legislature has to do its part by passing as soon as possible key fiscal and revenue bills. All of us have to continue to work, to curb our spending, to save and to put some of our savings in investments instead of letting them lie idle in banks, in safety deposit boxes or under mattresses at home. It's good to dream about a better year but all of us have to act and strive to make it a reality.



Hard slog as dance

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

SCHOOLS have reopened while hotels have taken down their "Fully Booked" signs. Pilgrims, *balikbayans* and out-of-town pickpockets are leaving, as Cebu ends its colorful Sinulog festival honoring the Santo Niño.

This year's rites set records: from a religious procession of 700,000 to street parties and 46 contingents from Misamis to Pampanga choreographing versions of the prayer-dance to the Niño. Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia and Margot Osmeña, the wife of the city mayor, sashayed as lead dancers at the packed Sports Center. Cebuana-now-Canadian soprano Lilac Cano belted out native songs to a standing room audience. Crowds lined the sludge-polluted Mactan channel shores as a fluvial parade of 86 boats (one ran aground) scattered flower petals on the "galleon" with the Niño. That gut reaction evoked Luke's description about "crowds pressed forward" along Galilee's shores.

Ferdinand Magellan sailed up what was, in 1521, a pristine channel, with the Flemish icon of the Child. Given to Sugbu's rulers, the second Spanish expedition rediscovered the Niño in 1565. Over the centuries, the Child has drawn the desperate, the skeptics, even the cynical.

That mix nurtures legends. Some nights, an old tale goes, the Child walks the streets, comforting, healing. Mornings, *amor-seco* or "dry love" grass stud the Child's cloak, some swear. Botanists dub that weed andropagan aciculatus. All the yarn means, they shrug, is that the place is semi-arid. Cebu's forest cover is down to almost zero.

Given local affection for the Sto. Niño, the Vatican permits the local church to set aside the third Sunday of every January for the Infant. But does devotion coexist, in Jesuit psychologist Jaime Bulatao's image, on a "split-level" with amoral conduct? Is worship sealed off from deeds?

Mayor Tomas Osmeña prays to the Niño—and orders that the Child's Fifth Commandment be scrapped. "Pull the trigger," he tells policemen when dealing with suspected rapists. "I'll take care of the legal fallout."

Mayor Thadeo Ouano welcomes the Niño to Mandaue yearly. Yet, one of Asia's biggest shabu lab pitched tent in his fiefdom—without his knowledge, he insists.

Indeed, "there's a marked dichotomy between faith and life, between worship and activity," an earlier Cebu Pastoral Assembly noted. So, how do the vulnerable, specially the children, fare in a "split-level" society? "Are our children getting any better?" asks the Food and Nutrition Research Institute.

Malnutrition stunts 4 out of every 10 preschoolers in Cebu City, the 5th National Nutrition Survey found. Compare that to Siquijor's two. In Mandaue, 37 percent were anemic, higher than Bohol's 28 percent.

By age eight, classmates tower 11 centimeters over the ill-fed kids, a mid-1990 joint study by North Carolina and San Carlos Universities showed. IQs were markedly lower. Corrosive hidden hunger was tracked, at its devastating worst, in math and languages.

So did the 41st (out of 45 countries) ranking of by Filipino students in the 2003 International Mathematics and Science Tests validate this finding? The linkage can be debated. But Edwin Markham's anguished query resonates: "Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?"

"Nutritional improvement within the 11 years (being compared) was not even five percent," the 5th survey update complained. "(At this rate), it will take maybe half a century before we can eradicate the problem of malnutrition."

Nationwide, one out of three among over 9.3 million schoolchildren is a puny underweight, alongside their Singaporean or Thai counterparts. Koreans or Chinese tower over another 3.2 million who are stunted.

Fund shortages kept the 6th National Nutrition Survey from drawing up a province-by-province breakdown. But the same dismal pattern persists. Six out of 10 infants, up to a year old, are anemic. Scrawny mothers often give birth to premature kids who, by age three will be stunted, the Asian Development Bank notes.

Worse, ill-fed kids can be sapped "from 10 to 14 percent of intelligence quotient (IQ)." That damage is irreversible. No pork barrel will relight addled brains in dwarfed kids.

The three nutrition surveys document persistent inadequacy of an essential service. But "throwing more money at this problem will not solve it," says the World Bank's Development Report. "Services work when poor people stand at the center of it's provision... When voices of the poor are heard by politicians, that's when providers have incentives to serve."

Broaden the poor's choices and participation, so they oversee and can discipline shoddy providers, the World Bank suggests. "Community-managed schools in El Salvador, where parents visited regularly, lowered teacher absenteeism and raised test scores."

Second, increase citizen participation by making relevant information available. Service delivery surveys in Bangalore, India, led citizens to pressure politicians to help ignored communities.

The third tack is, reward effective service providers and penalize the inept. Cambodia pegged salaries of medical workers to the health of households.

There's no alternative to the hard slog of reforming delivery systems, jammed by politics. Yet, that is prayer in its most concrete form in a schizo society that screams for redress to the Niño who said: "Let the little children come to Me..."

(*E-mail : juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph*)

Impeachable

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I AGREE with Jovito Salonga that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is impeachable. But I differ with him on the reasons for it.

Salonga says GMA betrayed the Constitution when she allowed Joseph Estrada to go abroad. Clearly, he says, she will do anything to cling to power, including flouting the law to appease her foes. "From the time she ascended to the presidency in January 2001, GMA has had no use for the rule of law. She has always wanted Estrada to go scot-free abroad."

I agree completely that it defeats the purpose of prosecuting Erap to allow him to live regally in Hong Kong, on taxpayers' money in the form of past loot. An arthritic knee is not a life-threatening condition, and the exodus of local doctors to the US and Canada notwithstanding, there are still enough bone doctors in this country to patch him up.

But I myself lost all appetite for the prosecution of Erap when assailed by the spectacle of the pot calling the kettle black. Why should I believe the Villaraza law firm will cleanse this earth of its dregs by convicting Erap? I know two wrongs do not make a right, and our attitude should be that if our present officials are just as guilty of corruption, let us not forget about past sinners but only punish current ones as well. Or hound them with the same passion. But it lessens the urgency of "making an example" of Erap. It is the wrong example. It does not say, "Don't steal," it says, "Don't get caught." It doesn't say, "Be honest," it says, "Be sly."

The GMA administration borrowed more than the last two combined and has only widespread hunger, skyrocketing prices, foreign investors and local residents flying away, and an impending economic crisis to show for it. Where did the money go? I never believed in "lifestyle audit" as a way to curb corruption because it doesn't curb corruption. All it curbs is ostentation. All it prevents is high-rolling crooks flaunting their loot by day, it doesn't prevent miserly ones from counting their hoard at night. I grant crooks who flaunt their loot add insult to injury. But better a humongous insult than a humongous injury. Sticks and stones can break bones, including those of the knees, but not so insults.

I agree that GMA is impeachable, but not because she allowed Erap to go to Hong Kong. She is impeachable for the very reason Joker Arroyo gave in his speech at the beginning of Erap's impeachment trial, which is the betrayal of public trust. There is no dearth of legal grounds to impeach GMA, but well beyond that (which is the true basis for impeaching presidents), there is the weight of the moral one as well. It is not just corruption of the body that calls for impeachment, it is the corruption of the soul.

You want to impeach GMA, impeach her for the way she conducted the elections. Erap at least had a clear electoral mandate, the only question was whether he betrayed it. GMA does not, the question to begin with is whether she has the right to rule or not. None of this includes her deceiving the public about her ambitions. There is no legal proscription against lying; if there were, this country's politicians would disappear from this earth faster than the victims of tsunami. Though the fact that she used Rizal to mount her hoax must truly suggest her lack of scruples in clinging to power, as Salonga puts it.

Look at the number of violations she committed during the elections. The Constitution says the Comelec should be populated by commissioners whose virtues rival Caesar's wife. She populated it with commissioners who fleeced the taxpayers of several billions by giving a fly-by-night computer company the contract to computerize canvassing. The scam was exposed and the computerization never happened, but the culprits, including those who approved the deal, were never punished. She rewarded them with more powers to supervise the counting through the old ballot box. And you want to run after Erap?

The Constitution says an incumbent president may not run again. Though the Constitution also said GMA could run again by the fact that she did not finish four years, it did suggest that she could not run as an incumbent. Which meant she had to resign if she wanted to run. The reason for the ban was clear: so the incumbent would not waste taxpayers' money to seek reelection. She ran anyway as an incumbent. The fact that the Supreme Court upheld her on this does not settle the question, it only raises questions about the quality of mind, or state of soul, of the current justices.

She did go on to waste taxpayers' money to get reelected. That point can't be lost even on the blind. Well, a local saying does say the hardest person to wake up is the one pretending to be asleep. The PCSO and Pagcor TV ads about GMA that ran up to election day were legitimate government expense and not electioneering? The GMA posters that littered the highways from Aparri to Jolo were legitimate government expense and not electioneering? The sudden doles of this and that government office were legitimate government expense and not electioneering? The self-proclaimed watchdogs of society have much to answer for accepting this as a fact of life. It is a fact of death, or suicide.

I leave Susan Roces to make her case about the counting.

Any one of these can be ground for impeachment. Taken together, they constitute moral turpitude of the kind that Joker Arroyo talked about during Erap's impeachment trial. No, this isn't just corruption of the body, this is corruption of the soul. This isn't just violating this and that legal provision, this is blotting out decency from the horizon. This isn't just pillaging the treasury, this is robbing a country of its future.

Salonga is right: GMA is impeachable. Question is: Who's going to do it?

Text eats into poor's food budget

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

PROF. Felipe Miranda of Pulse Asia Inc. recently pointed out at the Kilosbayan Forum that while the economy may have grown by more than 6 percent last year, the high prices of consumer products forced more than 10 million poor Filipinos to further reduce their food intake. He stressed that 49 percent of 1,200 respondents to a recent survey cited high inflation as the most urgent national concern. Doubtless recent factors such as the killer floods and the "meningo" disease have affected the prices of food commodities. But a recent news item also quoted Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura as saying that Filipinos are actually paying more for text and other mobile phone services than for food. In other words, it's not just inflation that's eating into our food intake, it's those text messages and cellular phone calls too. Which is worrisome.

* * *

I have long advocated the need for a rational way to curb texting, which has become a harmful national pastime. People don't text because they have to, but because they now regard it as a game or pastime, even when it's no longer healthy to do so, as it eats into their food budget and cuts the time for study and work. One rational way is to put a ceiling on the number for free texts, beyond which they should already be taxed. Many Congress members realize the wisdom of this, but they are too scared of the *masa* to push for it. Paging statesmen.

* * *

From her media statements, President Macapagal-Arroyo is upbeat about the economy, and from certain indicators, she has reason to be. The economy posted a 6-percent growth last year and the bullish stock market has breached the Phisix index. The peso is gaining strength, owing mainly to the $8 billion OFWs remitted last year. Our exports last year surged better than in the previous five years. The Supreme Court revised its earlier ruling against foreign investments in the mining industry, and they are expected to vigorously come in within the next two or three years, each venture said to bring at least P1 billion. On the security front (which directly affects business), the government has been making inroads against criminality as kidnap gangs and drug syndicates are being busted.

* * *

But there are still clouds hovering over the economy, as GMA noted in her MOPC speech. There's the prospect of a one- or two-notch downgrade by international credit rating agencies. Neda chief Romulo Neri has told to the Cabinet that a downgrade would cost RP about P1 billion in actual cost of borrowings; but what's worse is that we'd be the only country in the region that would be downgraded, thus, further eroding our image abroad as a favorable site for foreign investments. BSP records indicate that in the first 11 months of 2004, foreign direct investments (FDI) dropped by a whopping 54.6 percent! The House of Representatives recently passed on second reading the rationalization of fiscal incentives bill, which is hoped to perk up investments, but heaven knows when this will become law.

* * *

The biggest headache of the administration, as GMA admitted, is the debt-to-GDP ratio, which she hopes can be trimmed by the various revenue bills now sleeping in the Senate. Economists point out that RP's debt-to-GDP ratio has already exceeded the "prudent level" of 70 percent, hitting 71 percent at the end of 2003 and going up to 90 percent as of September 2004. Luckily, as former Finance Secretary Roberto de Ocampo pointed out before the American Chamber of Commerce, the debt burden is "still manageable" since the maturity profile of most of our debts is geared toward the medium and long-term, unlike Argentina's in 2001, where 90 percent were short-term, causing it to default on its payment. But De Ocampo warned that the debt stock of nearly $60 billion continues to rise and can pose a problem in the medium term, and that a third of government expenditure now goes to servicing the public debt stock. What makes it worse, he said, is that nearly 60 percent of this debt is denominated in foreign currencies.

RP's problem can be appreciated, he said, when it's considered that its public debt as a percentage of revenues is highest at 500 percent, in contrast to Thailand's 150 percent. This makes RP vulnerable to "event risk," i.e., the ability to tap international capital markets when needed.

* * *

A 12-year-old Filipino violin prodigy/math wizard is reaping fantastic honors for the country, but badly needs help from the government and the private sector. Maria Joaquin "Chino" Sebastian Gutierrez, now on a violin and high school scholarship in Munich, Germany, again won in a math contest covering all high schools in that city. This will enable him to compete with all high schools in the state of Bavaria, of which Munich is the capital, and if he wins again, he'll compete with all high schools in Germany; if he wins in the entire country, he'll be able to compete in an international math contest.

When Chino was first admitted as a high school freshman, he immediately impressed the faculty. Having arrived only three days before the contest, he won first place in math, causing his teacher to chide all his German classmates. He won first place also in a German oral rendition, where the students were asked to recite their own choice of a German piece. Chino memorized eight stanzas of a poem by Goethe and delivered them in flawless German! Then came the violin contest where he came out first, with one of the jurors for that violin scholarship, reading his name, proudly proclaiming him as Spanish. The four other judges shouted back, "He's Filipino." Chino told his mother Bambi that he felt even more proud for having been hailed as Filipino than for, again, being first.

(*To be continued.*)

Disastrous consequences

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IT WAS a most touching portrait, that of former South African President Nelson Mandela, his wife Graca Machel and grandson at the memorial service for Mandela's son Makgatho.

Mandela had earlier revealed that Makgatho, his son by his first wife Evelyn, died as a result of AIDS. The announcement was regarded by many as an act of supreme courage, as it broke "one of the most stubborn African taboos surrounding the pandemic."

While HIV/AIDS affects an estimated one in nine South Africans, more people than in any other nation, there's still a lot of denial and superstition surrounding the disease. Publicly admitting his son's disease, and thereby defying the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS, Mandela not only added a personal dimension to the discussion of the disease, he also raised its public profile and proved it could affect members of even the "best" families.

Shame and stigma attached to AIDS have served to drive the disease underground, with people living with HIV/AIDS forced to conceal their condition for fear of being abandoned by their families, losing their jobs or shunned by their friends. By coming out in public with his son's HIV status before his death, Mandela has served to lift some of the veil of secrecy surrounding AIDS, and perhaps hasten the world's response to the pandemic.

Mandela had long been an outspoken advocate of AIDS awareness, long before he even knew about Makgatho's illness, he clarified, and even while South African officials were still in denial about the disease.

Ironically, one of the consequences of the tsunami disaster, which has provoked a global outpouring of aid and assistance to the affected countries, is a feared reduction in international commitments to fighting AIDS. World leaders should not lose their focus on AIDS. For while the tsunami may have killed more than 150,000 people, HIV/AIDS continues to kill thousands around the world every day, "equivalent to a tsunami every two weeks," an official of UNAIDS said.

* * *

AMONG THE MORE than 100,000 victims of the tsunami disaster, women and girls face problems specific to their gender, a United Nations study reveals.

The tsunami may have made no distinction between men and women, but it has produced "some very gender-specific after-shocks," the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said recently. These range from women's traditional role in caring for the sick to increased cases of rape and abuse, some of which are taking place even in evacuation centers.

The FAO report said understanding and measuring the differences in needs between men and women tsunami victims is "essential for an effective response," stressing the need to raise awareness on gender issues among decision- and policy-makers "to ensure that women's and men's different needs are reflected in policies, practices and resources through the phases of relief, rehabilitation and development."

The burden on women may have increased due to the high number of people injured or who become ill as epidemics develop, FAO said, noting that due to the traditional division of labor in households in the tsunami-hit areas, women are expected to take care of the sick and injured members of the family. They also have the responsibility to fetch water and may now need to increase the amount of time dedicated to collecting both drinking water and fresh water for agriculture crops.

* * *

THEN there's the matter of sexual violence, with the number of reported sexual assaults of women and girls rising, especially in Sri Lanka and Indonesia, two of the hardest-hit areas. Fear of sexual violence will affect the lives and chances of survival of women and girl survivors long after the crisis has passed, since it has been found to limit women's and girls' mobility, for example in search of new economic opportunities, FAO added.

"Likewise, this fear is behind their reluctance to moving into camps where they could have access to food. Women and children are often the most vulnerable because of their lower socio-economic standing, in terms of limited access to necessary resources. They lack influence due to inequality and disempowerment, and have often less decision-making power and control over their lives," it said.

Looking at longer-term needs, FAO called for the provision of credit and financial assets to both men and women according to their livelihood needs.

Differentiating between the survivors by age and sex will facilitate a sustainable response, it added, calling for the empowerment of women by recruiting them for assessments and ensuring their full representation in community groups and meetings to ensure that they play a full role in decision-making about relief.

* * *

MEANWHILE, here's another call for a humane response to the victims of another kind of disaster, the one that befell Baguio as a result of the meningococcemia scare.

The Good Shepherd Sisters wish to inform regular patrons of their Baguio convent products, like the incomparable ube jam, strawberry preserves, breads and cookies, that these are now available at their Quezon City convent (behind St. Bridget's School along Aurora Boulevard in Cubao). Extremely popular among Baguio residents and visitors alike, such that the store at peak seasons have to limit the number of bottles of ube jam sold per customer, the Good Shepherd products are more than just tasty treats. Proceeds from the sales are used to finance the studies of scholars as well as to provide employment for poor residents.

With meningococcemia driving away tourists and visitors, as well as buyers of the Good Shepherd products, the scholarship program is now in peril. Do drop by the Good Shepherd convent in Quezon City and help keep a good program going.

All that glitters: the mining industry

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

MINING is back in the headlines after a long torpid sleep where small scale miners continued their panning and their use of mercury (without anyone being particularly concerned about their health, it seems). There are the usual protests regarding exploitation and environmental degradation but no one is offering an alternative solution to the unemployment problem or the creation of jobs.

It was known during the Spanish times that the Philippines had rich deposits of gold, copper, iron and coal although little was done to develop them due in part to the hostility of the mountain tribes. Even Masbate, which isn't known for anything much except for its lack of peace and order, is believed to have old mines in Aroroy dating back to pre-Spanish times. Chinese pottery from before the Ming Dynasty has been found in the area. Gold was believed to have been exported to China as early as the A.D. 300, but that might be an exaggeration.

Hernando Riquel, Legaspi's chronicler, in writing about gold mines, could have been referring to the Paracale-Mambulao district in Camarines Norte since gold was panned there before Legaspi's arrival. In 1626, Don Diego de Espina discovered a vein called *"vena grande"* or *"vena real"* on Mt. Calacot near Mambulao. It took another 200 years before a company, Ancla de Oro, was established to exploit it. The Philippine Mineral Syndicate, an English company, entered the field in 1892 but its operations ceased with the 1896 Revolution before production could be started.

How much was produced before organized mining companies came in is not known. Morga in 1609 mentions $200,000 worth annually. Montero y Vidal claim that local production didn't fall below P100,000 a year. Other known gold localities were Northern Mindanao, Cebu and the Mountain Province.

Coal was discovered in Cebu in 1827 after the advent of steam boats. The first concession was granted to Viña, Roxas y Compañia in 1853 to exploit the Guila-Guila coal deposits on Mananga River near Cebu City. Incredibly, after spending P70,000 to P80,000, it was discovered that "faulting" had displaced the coal so that the company disbanded.

Coal was also found on Batan Island, Albay, in 1842, in Bacon, San Esteban, Sorsogon, in Cataingan on the eastern part of Masbate and in Mindanao in the Sibuguey district.

Next to gold, iron was also exploited. As early as 1664, there were local furnaces in Bulacan producing agricultural implements. Other known deposits were in Paracale and the Caraballo Mountains in Luzon. The earliest concession was granted to Padre Belli in 1781 allowing him to operate in Angat. This was followed by Santiago Hison's petition requesting recognition as the discoverer of the iron deposits in Sapang Bacal in 1815. These deposits ended up with D. Maria Alteza Fernando.

Igorots were producing utensils from the ore deposits of Mankayan. In 1850, the government, with a military column for protection, began to explore the mines. It is estimated that 600,000 pounds of copper were produced between 1840 and 1855.

Tomas de Balbas had 120 Chinese laborers working his four claims in 1855.

Black gold or fossil fuel would be a god-send, but considering our track record, chances are it would only lead to more corruption and the people would remain poor as the proverbial church mice. However, way back in 1890, there was already a report of gas or petroleum in a geologic report. Some shales were found in Cebu and Panay from which petroleum could be extracted. In 1896, Smith, Bell and Company drilled two wells near Toledo, Cebu, but the Revolution broke out. A small quantity was produced. There was also combustible gas in Quinuilian Creek in Panay.

Non-metals such as sulphur were extracted on Biliran Island and in Burauen, Leyte. There were several quarries as well near and around Manila, including Makati.

Basalt was obtained from Morong and adobe from Mariquina, San Mateo, Guadalupe and Rizal, Meycauayan. The principal stone used in church construction was volcanic tuff, volcanic rock and along the coastlines, coral limestone. Marble was quarried in Romblon and kaolin obtained from Mount Makiling and used to make water paints. Strangely enough it wasn't utilized to produce porcelain nor has anything about its further use been known.

Whether there will be oil exploration in the Spratlys with China (seeing as locally we couldn't raise the capital needed anyway) and whether any oil will be found should be interesting. Since everything moves at a turtle's pace, by the time anything happens, the rest of the world should have found a clean substitute for fossil fuel.

The Americans basically made use of the Spanish records and continued production around the same districts. The production of gold increased due to better methods of extraction.

During the American era, chromite was discovered in Zambales and an iron deposit in Surigao. It was said that there was only a limited amount of chromium in the world and the Philippines possessed the biggest known body of the ore.

(*Data from "The Mineral Resources of the Philippines Islands for the years 1924-25"*)

* * *

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

Starting at the end

YOUNG BLOOD

Robi Mansueto

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

A BLANK page was something I feared. For some, such a page meant purity, flawlessness, perfection. But to me, it meant emptiness.

People fill paper with doodles and sayings, if only to relieve themselves of the boredom of looking at a bare piece of paper. Or to give free rein to the rush of excitement to express themselves or stamp their own mark.

When I graduated, I thought that I was done with writing essays. It felt like I was bidding farewell to the academe. And yet in order to understand the life changes around me, I have found myself again putting my thoughts on paper.

A year after I left college, I noticed that my friends and I were going all out to prove ourselves somehow. Working in prestigious firms, pursuing graduate studies or trying to live and work away from home—all was aimed at advancing somewhere in our lives. Some of us remained in touch, some fell apart and others carved out new identities.

I guess it wasn't so much that people feared the inevitable separation, the drifting apart after graduation. It was more like instinctively knowing what being separated meant. For despite the memories of shared torture over difficult assignments and endless rounds of black coffee, people change. Life happens.

Sometimes, it dawns on you while you sit across from each other, eating French fries at a McDo outlet. After the initial exhilaration of meeting again and the usual race to update each other on what happened since you met the last time, there is a moment of pensive silence. It may last a minute or merely six seconds, but it is there. You stare at the distance, then look at your close friend and you realize that your lives are no longer as closely intertwined as they used to be. She talks of new friends, a.k.a. officemates, and you talk about a career change. She describes a demanding schedule and you say you have a rather flexible job that allows you room for creativity. Funny anecdotes find their way into the conversation. And then the discussion drifts to shared experiences, but even then you know that school life is just a thin thread that binds you to each other. Easy to break, yet easy to get entangled in if you allow it.

At a certain point, you begin to feel nostalgic and realize that you have missed so many things. Silence reigns as both of you are lost in thought.

It used to be that you couldn't wait for life to get started; you just wanted to get school over and done with. You just wanted to be free. Now, you wish you have more time to prepare a bit more for what you have to do or say.

Your head clears and you find yourself staring at the present. Before you know it, the fries are all gone. Back to the real world. A term you hardly understood until now. You stare at your friend, hug her and start to miss her before she even turns to walk away.

I don't know what I actually expected when I left college. Just for things to be different maybe. And they have been different—in more ways than one. I don't know whether to be grateful or not. But I want to be honest. Perhaps filling the page is a good way to start.

Robi Mansueto, 23, is a graduate of the University of the Philippines Cebu and now works in a bank.

Confused

Jean Cielo Gomez

WHEN I look back and think about what I did with my life, I am left wondering whether I have spent it the way I wanted.

Let me see. At age 22, I got married to a person chosen for me by my parents. You see, in this modern world of gadgets and technology, there still exists a tribe which follows the tradition of arranged marriages and I happen to belong to it.

At 23, I gave birth to a son and I was pushed to the complex life of motherhood. When the nurse handed me my baby, I didn't know how to carry him. I was afraid that I might drop him. But, as they say, there are no strict rules in motherhood, it comes naturally. I just reached for my baby and followed my maternal instinct. Luckily, I have never accidentally dropped him.

At 27, I finished my law degree. While I was in law school, I had to juggle my time between memorizing the provisions of the Amended Rape Law and cooing my baby to sleep. During the bar review, I had to endure not seeing my son for six months. I had no choice. I had to concentrate on the review so I would have no regrets in case I do not pass the bar exam.

That in a nutshell is my life story. But I cannot help but wonder how life would be if I didn't marry at 22, the age when women experience all the fun and challenges the world has to offer. I wanted to experience partying as if there is no tomorrow, enjoy meeting different persons from all walks of life (especially those belonging to the male species!), shop till I drop, eat out with my friends and do other things I never imagined of doing in college when I was aiming to graduate magna cum laude. I don't know if I should feel guilty entertaining those thoughts. But, heck, there is nothing wrong with making my thoughts run free. As long as I keep everything in the realm of my imagination, I will not be committing a crime.

Honestly, I did not want to get married so early. I wanted to turn down my husband's parents' proposal. But refusing a marriage proposal from a well-known clan is an insult to the whole clan, including their dead forebears. Besides, I did not want to be ostracized by my family by being the first to break an old tradition. So, being a good daughter, I accepted my fate and was blessed to be married to a loving man, a good provider with a great sense of humor, whom I have learned to love.

However, despite having a good husband, an adorable and intelligent five-year-old son, I still find myself at a crossroads in my life. If I pass the bar, what will I do with my life? Can I handle the pressure of motherhood and a career? What field of law will I practice? Will my husband allow me? Or to put it differently, will my religion and culture which expect women to be obedient and submissive to their husbands permit me? If I fail, can I afford financially and emotionally to go through the experience of reviewing and denying myself life's small pleasures and witnessing my son's growing years? Or can I accept the possibility that I am not destined to become a lawyer?

Others might find my "dilemma" very shallow, but, hey, twentysomething is that point when everything becomes bigger than life and is over-analyzed. Perhaps when I am in my 30s, I won't feel so confused. As I wait for the results of the bar, I will try to derive some pleasure from analyzing the possible outcomes of my decisions in the future.

Jean Cielo Gomez, 27, is praying she will make it to the roster of lawyers.

One race, two faces

IT is, perhaps, more than coincidence, with a twist of convergence, that the two biggest stories of year 2004—the war in Iraq and the Asian tsunami disaster—show, in graphic and glaring contrast, two opposing faces of the human persona: the brutal violence and savage hatred in the Iraq war, on the one hand; and the loving compassion and caring concern for the victims of the tsunami disaster, on the other. It is as if the human race has two different species.

All the great spiritual teachings—from Moses, Buddha, Christ, Mohammad, to mention some—teach and preach the unity of all mankind, in a common brotherhood under the universal fatherhood of God (my apologies to feminists for this masculine-biased terms). Science, too, has reinforced this teaching: By rigid tracing of mitochondrial DNA on the female line, it has been found that all humans indeed descended from one woman who lived around 170,000 years ago in southern Africa. So Eve was real after all, and we are closer to each other than we think.

What religion has been saying these past few thousand years, science has essentially confirmed recently. And yet it is in the name of religion that many of history's wars and atrocities have been committed. And yet the Christians and Muslims killing each other in the Iraq war share the faith and beliefs of the Christians and Muslims who are helping each other in the wake of the tsunami disaster. The Christians and Muslims killing each other in the Philippines share the faith and beliefs of the Christians and Muslims helping each other in the Philippines. And yet again, as the famous boxer Mohammed Ali put it, religions have different names, but they all contain essentially the same truths.

The death tolls in the Iraq war and tsunami disaster are staggering and increasing with each passing day. Perhaps, the one lesson we can learn from these tragedies is that human beings could be caring and compassionate, and there is no need for brutality, savagery and hatred. After all, physically and spiritually, we are all brothers and sisters under the universal parenthood of God. Mankind should realize this. The alternative is human extinction.

—**SAMUEL J. YAP**
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Sto. Tomas, Batangas

THE CHILDREN are the first to suffer in an overpopulated country.

PDI PHOTO/ REM ZAMORA

'Abusive' SSS requirements?

PLEASE allow me to express my dismay—which I am sure has been the dismay of many others similarly concerned—at this year's requirements of the Social Security System for a corporate member to be issued a "Certificate of Compliance." This document, previously called "SSS Clearance Certificate," is required by some cities and municipalities from entities securing or renewing their local business permits.

With all due respect, the new SSS requirements appear questionable and smack of clear indiscretion and abuse of authority on the part of the SSS.

First, the original copies of the documents, called "SBR/R-5/R-3/MI-1/ML-2/Collection Lists," should all be readily available from the SSS files. If they are not, it is either that the party applying for clearance had not submitted these documents and, therefore, it is not entitled to a compliance certificate; or that the supposedly computerized SSS records leave so much to be desired, in which case why should an innocent member suffer the consequence? Second, since when has had the SSS the authority to look into a member-company's Payroll Registers? Perhaps, only in specifically investigative circumstances, which nonetheless should call for equally specific, not general, authorization. And third, has the Securities and Exchange Commission duly deputized the SSS for the latter to require the submission of a corporation's latest general Information Sheet?

Of course, for most SSS member-companies, these entirely new requirements are not too difficult to produce, albeit given the horrendous photocopies they would entail. The point is, are they really necessary for the purpose they are being required? Or with respect to the first requirement, doesn't the SSS just want to update its own files and records at the expense of its members?

—**RUDY L. CORONEL,**
10 Venus St., Golden Country Homes,
Alangilan, Batangas City

Wrong on Galileo, wrong on population

THEY did not ask to be born, but the children are the first to suffer in an overpopulated country. Statistics gathered by Philippine Legislators Committee on Population and Development Foundation Inc. (PLCPD) are grim and shocking.

Due to overpopulation, the government now spends only P21.71 for every elementary and high school student per day in a ten-month school year.

Five million children are laborers, 1.5 million live on the streets, 280,000 are pregnant, 3.7 million of preschool age are malnourished, 3.8 million suffer from stunted growth and 70,000 are enfeebled.

Out of every 100 children who do not reach the age of five, 38 die of curable diseases. Forty-nine percent of the total population of infants and 26 percent of children age 1-6 suffer from iron-deficiency anemia.

That's not all. Our public school system is short of 40,000 classrooms and 50,000 teachers. The current textbook-to-student ratio is 1:4 (one book for every four students) while the teacher-student ratio is 1:80 (one teacher, 80 students).

With these facts, there are still those who think that the Philippines is not overpopulated. Our country has surpassed the population density of China, and in nine years, will equal that of India. With a projected poverty level near 50 percent, this is a sure recipe for disaster. We are already feeling the heat this early—high unemployment, high budget deficit, exodus of people, lack of housing and potable water, air and water pollution, poor health services and substandard public education system—to name a few.

Unfortunately, the government is still in a state of denial. It will not admit that overpopulation has something to do with poverty, pollution, and the decreasing standards of living by the people. Moreover, the faster the population growth, the faster the resources get drained.

We should not worry about the Catholic Church's stand on family planning. History has proven that the Church is not infallible. It took 400 years for it to acknowledge that Galileo was right all along—that the earth revolves around the sun, not the other way around. It condemned the idea of Darwin as heresy until the discovery of dinosaur fossils. Even in Italy, where the Vatican is located, family planning is sanctioned and encouraged by the government.

How long must we wait until both the Church and the government realize that they are wrong on this issue?

—**MARY LOUISE F. SUGUI**
Cainta, Rizal

Remembering the unborn

MANY are rightly shocked by the recent tsunami disaster in which thousands of innocent people were swept to their death. A movement of solidarity has developed everywhere in the world to provide relief for those hit by the horrible tragedy in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, etc. Few, however, seem concerned that millions more—the most innocent of innocent—are being lawfully killed each day through abortion performed in hospitals and clinics around the globe, and in the most gruesome manner.

Given such a grave situation, we need now more than ever to have the courage to look the truth in the eye and to call things by their proper name, without yielding to convenient compromises or to the temptation of self-deception.

As members of the human family, we have a duty to uphold the rights of the unborn who are just as deserving of care and attention as the victims of the calamity in Asia. May the same global outpouring of love be extended to the unborn.

—**PAUL KOKOSKI**
234 Columbia Drive
Hamilton, Ontario,
L9C 3Y9, Canada.

Government did right on Naia Terminal 3

THIS citizen and member of the bar supports the government's takeover of Naia Terminal 3. First, power of eminent domain (the power to expropriate private property for public use) is well enshrined in the laws of our land. Second, the government took over the terminal not only for public purpose but in pursuit of the paramount interest of the nation. Third, the activation of the Naia 3—practically mothballed due to the wagon-encircling tactics of Piatco and Fraport—is in the interest of international travel and transport. And Piatco and Fraport, after all, will be given their just compensation.

We are against foreign investors? We are for foreign investors but certainly not the kind who violate our laws and engage in corrupt practices and who rob the wealth of our nation.

—**EDMUNDO H. ESCALANTE,**
president, Integrated Bar
of the Philippines,
Sorsogon Chapter,
Gubat, Sorsogon

Exercising circuit breakers in residential houses

THIS is in connection with the untimely demise of KC de Venecia. (God bless her soul!) What has not been mentioned so far was the probable flagrant failure of the safety device that should have prevented the fire from spreading rapidly.

A mansion the size of the De Venecia residence must have been equipped with an electrical safety device—a circuit breaker at the least—that would automatically shut off the supply of electricity any moment there is a malfunction in the power supply system. So far, I have not come across a report saying that the device did or did not perform as it was intended.

Even if the load is just a low-wattage Christmas decoration, the circuit breaker is supposed to trip off when the insulation of the wires melt. If the circuit breaker fails to disengage, voltage continues to be supplied, and this is converted into heat at the point of short circuit, thereby igniting whatever combustible material in the vicinity of the shorted line.

Practically all the available circuit breakers in the market now are the molded type variety that discourages tampering of their components. But like any manufactured product, the circuit breaker has a limited operational life. Although it could be in use for a long period of time, it also requires preventive maintenance. In practice, the need for such maintenance is usually taken for granted.

The simplest form of preventive maintenance program that could be applied to this circuit breaker is by exercising it at least twice a year. All that you have to do is to switch off the main breaker, then switch off and on all the branch breakers a few times—with all the outlets in switch off position as a precautionary measure. Then make sure that all the branch breakers are in off position. Then switch off and on the main breaker also a few times. When you are done with the procedure, switch on the main breaker after which activate the branch breakers one after the other.

As rightly said, prevention is the best medicine. But I suspect that no such preventive maintenance program was ever done in the Speaker's residence from the time it was constructed. And I think this is true in most residential buildings.

—**JOSE V. GONZALES**
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'Mass suicide Act'

I JOIN the protest against large-scale mining, which was allowed recently by the Supreme Court. Even if all our gold, copper, chromite, bauxite, nickel and other minerals are taken and sold to the world market, these would not be enough to satisfy the insatiable greed of the First World plunderers and industrial users.

After all our mineral resources have been exhausted, however, we would be left with nothing but poisoned gravel and sand, without mountains, rivers, flora and fauna. In other words, we would die as a people.

The Mining Act of 1995 is an act of self-destruction. It is mass suicide. It is a thousand times worse than the Quezon and Aurora timber and flood disaster and the tsunami that killed hundreds of thousands in South Asia.

The 10 SC justices who penned the decision should therefore be removed, not by impeachment, because Congress—which is controlled by the foreign mining plunderers and which passed the law—would not admit its error, but by some other means.

This is the same Court that declared constitutional, PD 1177, the automatic appropriations edict decreed by dictator Marcos. Under this decree, all the loans taken by the government, including the anomalous behest, private and fraudulent ones, are guaranteed by the government, hence they need not be deliberated by Congress. They are automatically covered by congressional appropriations. This unjust law has led to the present fiscal and economic crisis that threatens to destroy our society. And now, the anomalous mining decision.

The 10 justices changed their minds on the mining law for no other reason but to try to avert the impending crisis, which the SC helped create.

The Mining Act is yet another case that betrays the lack of democracy in our country. The 10 unelected individuals sitting as justices in the Supreme Court have sealed our collective death as a race and as a people.

—**GREGORIO T. FABROS,**
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One race, two faces

IT is, perhaps, more than coincidence, with a twist of convergence, that the two biggest stories of year 2004—the war in Iraq and the Asian tsunami disaster—show, in graphic and glaring contrast, two opposing faces of the human persona: the brutal violence and savage hatred in the Iraq war, on the one hand; and the loving compassion and caring concern for the victims of the tsunami disaster, on the other. It is as if the human race has two different species.

All the great spiritual teachings—from Moses, Buddha, Christ, Mohammad, to mention some—teach and preach the unity of all mankind, in a common brotherhood under the universal fatherhood of God (my apologies to feminists for this masculine-biased terms). Science, too, has reinforced this teaching: By rigid tracing of mitochondrial DNA on the female line, it has been found that all humans indeed descended from one woman who lived around 170,000 years ago in southern Africa. So Eve was real after all, and we are closer to each other than we think.

What religion has been saying these past few thousand years, science has essentially confirmed recently. And yet it is in the name of religion that many of history's wars and atrocities have been committed. And yet the Christians and Muslims killing each other in the Iraq war share the faith and beliefs of the Christians and Muslims who are helping each other in the wake of the tsunami disaster. The Christians and Muslims killing each other in the Philippines share the faith and beliefs of the Christians and Muslims helping each other in the Philippines. And yet again, as the famous boxer Mohammed Ali put it, religions have different names, but they all contain essentially the same truths.

The death tolls in the Iraq war and tsunami disaster are staggering and increasing with each passing day. Perhaps, the one lesson we can learn from these tragedies is that human beings could be caring and compassionate, and there is no need for brutality, savagery and hatred. After all, physically and spiritually, we are all brothers and sisters under the universal parenthood of God. Mankind should realize this. The alternative is human extinction.

—SAMUEL J. YAP
118 Granada, San Antonio Heights
Sto. Tomas, Batangas

'Abusive' SSS requirements?

PLEASE allow me to express my dismay—which I am sure has been the dismay of many others similarly concerned—at this year's requirements of the Social Security System for a corporate member to be issued a "Certificate of Compliance." This document, previously called "SSS Clearance Certificate," is required by some cities and municipalities from entities securing or renewing their local business permits.

With all due respect, the new SSS requirements appear questionable and smack of clear indiscretion and abuse of authority on the part of the SSS.

First, the original copies of the documents, called "SBR/R-5/R-3/MI-1/ML-2/Collection Lists," should all be readily available from the SSS files. If they are not, it is either that the party applying for clearance had not submitted these documents and, therefore, it is not entitled to a compliance certificate; or that the supposedly computerized SSS records leave so much to be desired, in which case why should an innocent member suffer the consequence? Second, since when has had the SSS the authority to look into a member-company's Payroll Registers? Perhaps, only in specifically investigative circumstances, which nonetheless should call for equally specific, not general, authorization. And third, has the Securities and Exchange Commission duly deputized the SSS for the latter to require the submission of a corporation's latest general Information Sheet?

Of course, for most SSS member-companies, these entirely new requirements are not too difficult to produce, albeit given the horrendous photocopies they would entail. The point is, are they really necessary for the purpose they are being required? Or with respect to the first requirement, doesn't the SSS just want to update its own files and records at the expense of its members?

—RUDY L. CORONEL,
10 Venus St., Golden Country Homes,
Alangilan, Batangas City

THE CHILDREN are the first to suffer in an overpopulated country.

PDI PHOTO/ REM ZAMORA

Wrong on Galileo, wrong on population

THEY did not ask to be born, but the children are the first to suffer in an overpopulated country. Statistics gathered by Philippine Legislators Committee on Population and Development Foundation Inc. (PLCPD) are grim and shocking.

Due to overpopulation, the government now spends only P21.71 for every elementary and high school student per day in a ten-month school year.

Five million children are laborers, 1.5 million live on the streets, 280,000 are pregnant, 3.7 million of preschool age are malnourished, 3.8 million suffer from stunted growth and 70,000 are enfeebled.

Out of every 100 children who do not reach the age of five, 38 die of curable diseases. Forty-nine percent of the total population of infants and 26 percent of children age 1-6 suffer from iron-deficiency anemia.

That's not all. Our public school system is short of 40,000 classrooms and 50,000 teachers. The current textbook-to-student ratio is 1:4 (one book for every four students) while the teacher-student ratio is 1:80 (one teacher, 80 students).

With these facts, there are still those who think that the Philippines is not overpopulated. Our country has surpassed the population density of China, and in nine years, will equal that of India. With a projected poverty level near 50 percent, this is a sure recipe for disaster. We are already feeling the heat this early—high unemployment, high budget deficit, exodus of people, lack of housing and potable water, air and water pollution, poor health services and substandard public education system—to name a few.

Unfortunately, the government is still in a state of denial. It will not admit that overpopulation has something to do with poverty, pollution, and the decreasing standards of living by the people. Moreover, the faster the population growth, the faster the resources get drained.

We should not worry about the Catholic Church's stand on family planning. History has proven that the Church is not infallible. It took 400 years for it to acknowledge that Galileo was right all along—that the earth revolves around the sun, not the other way around. It condemned the idea of Darwin as heresy until the discovery of dinosaur fossils. Even in Italy, where the Vatican is located, family planning is sanctioned and encouraged by the government.

How long must we wait until both the Church and the government realize that they are wrong on this issue?

—MARY LOUISE F. SUGUI
Cainta, Rizal

Remembering the unborn

MANY are rightly shocked by the recent tsunami disaster in which thousands of innocent people were swept to their death. A movement of solidarity has developed everywhere in the world to provide relief for those hit by the horrible tragedy in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, etc. Few, however, seem concerned that millions more—the most innocent of innocent—are being lawfully killed each day through abortion performed in hospitals and clinics around the globe, and in the most gruesome manner.

Given such a grave situation, we need now more than ever to have the courage to look the truth in the eye and to call things by their proper name, without yielding to convenient compromises or to the temptation of self-deception.

As members of the human family, we have a duty to uphold the rights of the unborn who are just as deserving of care and attention as the victims of the calamity in Asia. May the same global outpouring of love be extended to the unborn.

—PAUL KOKOSKI
234 Columbia Drive
Hamilton, Ontario,
L9C 3Y9, Canada.

Government did right on Naia Terminal 3

THIS citizen and member of the bar supports the government's takeover of Naia Terminal 3. First, power of eminent domain (the power to expropriate private property for public use) is well enshrined in the laws of our land. Second, the government took over the terminal not only for public purpose but in pursuit of the paramount interest of the nation. Third, the activation of the Naia 3—practically mothballed due to the wagon-encricling tactics of Piatco and Fraport—is in the interest of international travel and transport. And Piatco and Fraport, after all, will be given their just compensation.

We are against foreign investors? We are for foreign investors but certainly not the kind who violate our laws and engage in corrupt practices and who rob the wealth of our nation.

—EDMUNDO H. ESCALANTE,
president, Integrated Bar
of the Philippines,
Sorsogon Chapter,
Gubat, Sorsogon

Exercising circuit breakers in residential houses

THIS is in connection with the untimely demise of KC de Venecia. (God bless her soul!) What has not been mentioned so far was the probable flagrant failure of the safety device that should have prevented the fire from spreading rapidly.

A mansion the size of the De Venecia residence must have been equipped with an electrical safety device—a circuit breaker at the least—that would automatically shut off the supply of electricity any moment there is a malfunction in the power supply system. So far, I have not come across a report saying that the device did or did not perform as it was intended.

Even if the load is just a low-wattage Christmas decoration, the circuit breaker is supposed to trip off when the insulation of the wires melt. If the circuit breaker fails to disengage, voltage continues to be supplied, and this is converted into heat at the point of short circuit, thereby igniting whatever combustible material in the vicinity of the shorted line.

Practically all the available circuit breakers in the market now are the molded type variety that discourages tampering of their components. But like any manufactured product, the circuit breaker has a limited operational life. Although it could be in use for a long period of time, it also requires preventive maintenance. In practice, the need for such maintenance is usually taken for granted.

The simplest form of preventive maintenance program that could be applied to this circuit breaker is by exercising it at least twice a year. All that you have to do is to switch off the main breaker, then switch off and on all the branch breakers a few times—with all the outlets in switch off position as a precautionary measure. Then make sure that all the branch breakers are in off position. Then switch off and on the main breaker also a few times. When you are done with the procedure, switch on the main breaker after which activate the branch breakers one after the other.

As rightly said, prevention is the best medicine. But I suspect that no such preventive maintenance program was ever done in the Speaker's residence from the time it was constructed. And I think this is true in most residential buildings.

—JOSE V. GONZALES
joeg_spl@yahoo.com

'Mass suicide Act'

I JOIN the protest against large-scale mining, which was allowed recently by the Supreme Court. Even if all our gold, copper, chromite, bauxite, nickel and other minerals are taken and sold to the world market, these would not be enough to satisfy the insatiable greed of the First World plunderers and industrial users.

After all our mineral resources have been exhausted, however, we would be left with nothing but poisoned gravel and sand, without mountains, rivers, flora and fauna. In other words, we would die as a people.

The Mining Act of 1995 is an act of self-destruction. It is mass suicide. It is a thousand times worse than the Quezon and Aurora timber and flood disaster and the tsunami that killed hundreds of thousands in South Asia.

The 10 SC justices who penned the decision should therefore be removed, not by impeachment, because Congress—which is controlled by the foreign mining plunderers and which passed the law—would not admit its error, but by some other means.

This is the same Court that declared constitutional, PD 1177, the automatic appropriations edict decreed by dictator Marcos. Under this decree, all the loans taken by the government, including the anomalous behest, private and fraudulent ones, are guaranteed by the government, hence they need not be deliberated by Congress. They are automatically covered by congressional appropriations. This unjust law has led to the present fiscal and economic crisis that threatens to destroy our society. And now, the anomalous mining decision.

The 10 justices changed their minds on the mining law for no other reason but to try to avert the impending crisis, which the SC helped create.

The Mining Act is yet another case that betrays the lack of democracy in our country. The 10 unelected individuals sitting as justices in the Supreme Court have sealed our collective death as a race and as a people.

—GREGORIO T. FABROS,
corafabros2000@yahoo.com

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Oil spill ruins 7 ha of coral reefs

ATI-ATIHAN

ARNOLD ALMACEN

A performer joins the festivities of the Ati-atihan in Kalibo, Aklan that was marred by bloodshed. The festival pushed through, however, despite the bloodshed and merrymakers continued to have fun in the world-famous feast in honor of the Child Jesus.

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—An oil spill from a Malaysian barge damaged around seven hectares of coral reefs in Busuanga, Palawan.

This was the report received by Palawan provincial board member Arthur Ventura, environmental and natural resources committee chair.

Ventura was in the Calamianes Group of Islands in northern Palawan over the weekend to inspect the damage caused by the oil spill from Malaysian registered vessel Malindo I that ran aground off Calauit Island in Busuanga on Dec. 4 last year.

"According to reports from the local officials and an NGO named Fish, the damage was extensive. The water looked like chocolate," Ventura said.

The Busuanga local government unit has sought a P10-million compensation from the company that owns the barge.

Ventura said the company has to answer even if it was just using the innocent passage provision of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas.

"They have to pay for it," he said.

The barge Malindo I was being towed by a tugboat Malindo II when it ran aground about .05 nautical miles west of Barangay Cheey, Busuanga.

It was carrying 600 pieces of logs (around 190,800 board feet) enroute from Malaysia to China.

The tugboat was skippered by Capt. Jaka Darmanta, with eight Indonesian and one Malaysian crew members.

The assorted logs were 50.8 centimeters in diameter and about 20 meters long.

They measured bigger than the regular logs found in the Philippines, according to Department of Environment and Natural Resources officer Virgilio Tiongson.

There were also some *natò* and *ipil* species found.

Tiongson said the origin must be investigated because they could either be originally from Malaysia or from Palawan. During the last interview with Tiongson, it could not be established that the logs came from Palawan because there were transport documents from Malaysia.

The logs were transferred to another barge Usmaru I and was released by the Bureau of Customs last Dec. 24, 2004.

Ventura also said he was doubtful of the procedures for releasing the logs because the documents presented by the Philippine representative of the Malaysian company were all photocopies.

He said authorities should have established first the origin of the logs before releasing them. *Jofelle P. Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Lawyer posts bail on fraud charges

ROLEDA

LAWYER Danilo Roleda has filed a cash bail of P84,000 for six counts of falsification of public documents before Branch 16 of the Metropolitan Trial Court in the Cities, which had earlier issued a warrant for his arrest.

The charges were filed by Lara Villafuerte, wife of Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Raymond Villafuerte for allegedly submitting falsified documents to the Commission of Elections during the 2001 elections.

The falsified documents allegedly indicated that Roleda was the No. 1 nominee of party-list group Alab, an association of electric power consumers accredited by the Comelec in 2001.

Villafuerte, who was originally the No. 2 nominee of Alab, complained about the falsified documents that also alleged that Roleda was the elected Alab president.

Roleda was originally the No. 3 nominee of the group. Roleda, according to sources, has introduced himself as an associate of gambling tycoon Stanley Ho and as an adviser of President Macapagal-Arroyo. *Juan Escandor Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Pa thanks city for arrest of rapists, killers

TUGUEGARAO CITY—The father of a murdered high school sophomore here thanked the various sectors in the city for pooling their efforts that led to the arrest of his daughter's killers.

Rolando Ancheta, father of 14-year-old Dinaroe Ancheta, a student of the Cagayan National High School, said he was hoping that his daughter's murder would restore the trust and confidence of Cagayanos on law enforcers and local officials, and encourage them to go after perpetrators of other heinous crimes.

Dinaroe, who police said was raped, was found dead on Jan. 8 near the provincial capitol here. She was buried on Saturday.

Two suspects in her slaying, both teenagers and tricycle drivers in the city, were arrested by policemen in Tuao town on Thursday morning.

The Church, led by Archbishop Diosdado Talamayan, condemned the series of killings and other crimes being committed in the city. The academe also joined in the call for unity against crime especially those that involve and affect children.

Residents here are alarmed over the spate of crimes—burglary, robbery, snatching, shoplifting and drug use and trade—and asked local and police officials to act on them.

Mayor Randolph Ting earlier said the imposition of a citywide curfew among minors would not solve crimes here and asked parents to ensure their children's safety.

"I don't believe (that) imposing curfew (would solve the problem). Parents must be stricter. It is impossible for the police to be always on the lookout for wayward children," he said.

Cagayan Gov. Edgar Lara asked residents of the city to stay calm and trust the courts to give Dinaroe justice.

Police said Dinaroe was last seen alive on the afternoon of Jan. 7 aboard a tricycle. She was on her way home with two classmates.

Her parents reported her missing after she failed to come home on Friday night.

Police found Dinaroe's body on a road shoulder in Capitol Hills here. Her arms and legs were maimed and her body bore cigarette burns. Police said a bottle was inserted in her sex organ.

Police established the identities of the suspects based on information provided by the owner of the tricycle.

Police reports quoting the suspects' neighbors here said the suspects, upon learning that their sketches were released, had a haircut to mislead police. *Estanislao Caldez, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Displaced miners linked to gang of robbers using acetylene torch

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—Displaced miners in Benguet have been recruited as members of a syndicate behind the 23 bank and pawnshop robberies last year in Central Luzon, where about P40 million in cash and jewelry were stolen, police said.

Senior Supt. Jimmy Restua, Angeles City police chief, announced the involvement of Benguet miners in the operations of the Pespes robbery gang and its sub-groups.

In Monday's press conference here, Restua presented Alexander Tao-ey, 42, and Felix Bumogao, 40, of Tuba and Buguias towns in Benguet.

The two men were the fifth and sixth suspects arrested this month for pawnshop break-ins, reports showed.

According to Restua, Tao-ey and Bumogao admitted to being former miners. They were arrested as they were forcibly entering the back door of an RCBC branch in Balibago, Angeles City, north of here, at 3 a.m. on Sunday.

Charges of robbery and possession of marijuana and shabu were filed against them on Monday.

Mine workers were especially recruited for their knowledge in the use of acetylene in torching and melting the locks of vaults of banks and pawnshops, earning the name Acetylene Gang for their group, Restua said.

In all the 12 pawnshop break-ins and 11 bank robberies last year and two this month, burglars used acetylene to melt metal locks, investigation reports obtained by the INQUIRER showed.

According to Restua, the Pespes Gang has fanned out into various groups.

The financiers of Tao-ey's group were identified as a certain Jimmy Gambican, also known as Cuteng, and Robert Apagna, also known as Roger. Both are said to be based in Baguio City.

Based on police reports, the Acetylene Gang last year robbed at least three pawnshops in Nueva Ecija; two each in Bulacan, Pampanga and Angeles City; and one each in Bataan, Tarlac and Zambales.

Bank robberies last year in Pampanga totaled five; in Bataan, three; and in Nueva Ecija, Tarlac and Angeles City, one each. Most of these were rural banks. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Power co-op told to explain higher rate

ILAGAN, Isabela—Energy Regulatory Commission Chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. has asked electric cooperative officials here to explain the increase of generation system charge by more than three centavos per kilowatt hour.

Acting on complaints of member-consumers, Albano said his office only allowed a ceiling increase of P1.23-peso per kWh, and not P1.26-peso per kWh or higher.

Before the increase, Isabela Electric Cooperative (Iselco) II officials should have conducted public hearings and an information campaign, he said.

He said once the overcharges are officially specified, he would order Iselco to reimburse consumers.

"It has been the duty of the commission to regulate and ensure that electricity charges to consumers are fair, just and equal and the interests of both the consumers and the electricity providers are protected," he said.

The overcharges were incorporated in the purchased power adjustment (PPA) component of the consumers' monthly electricity bills. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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Senator's bike project pushes through amid meningo scare

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Reports on meningococcemia in this city did not deter Sen. Pia Cayetano, her siblings and more than 250 cyclists to pedal their way from La Union to Baguio on Saturday for the senator's Bike for Hope project.

"Our father (the late Sen. Renato Cayetano) used to bring us to Baguio every summer and during semestral breaks for a vacation, so this is really our second home," Cayetano said during a short program at the Baguio Convention Center on Saturday afternoon.

She said despite reports on the deadly meningitis strain, Baguio "is still a beautiful place."

"It is a city of smile and a place to rejuvenate," she said.

Cayetano's group biked the 48-km Rosario La Union-Baguio route to drum up support and raise funds for the Compañero Rene Cayetano Foundation (CRCF), which was formed by the family in memory of the late senator.

Mailet Bonoan, CRCF managing director, said from 40 participants last year, the number of cyclists who joined the Bike for Hope on its second year grew to about 300.

No fear

Bonoan said this was because the cyclists were not afraid of meningococcemia.

Mayor Braulio Yaranon said Baguio had been maligned in some media reports due to the meningococcemia cases reported here.

"We have 45,000 public school students and not one of them was infected by the disease. We have 2,000 city employees but no one was infected. We had one fatality in January but it was an isolated case and since Jan. 8, we have no reported case yet," Yaranon said.

Eager to reach Baguio immediately, Cayetano told a crowd of bikers and vendors here that she and her siblings Lino and Ren had to be literally pushed by other bikers along sections of the ascending Marcos Highway.

She said Lino had to be pushed by a man named Sherwin from Pangasinan while she had to be pushed by two men to finally reach Baguio.

"Lino and I arrived together but he had to go back for Ren who was resting (periodically) to enjoy the beauty of Baguio," she said.

Another sibling, Taguig Rep. Allan Peter Cayetano, did not join the cyclists but he helped his sister distribute boxes of assorted medicines and P20,000 to members of the Burnham Park Vendors Association.

Happy memories

Representative Cayetano said Burnham Park, one of the major attractions in the city, was part of their family's happy memories in Baguio.

The Cayetano children said the donation was a way of thanking the vendors for helping local tourism.

Senator Cayetano and the CRCF donated a generator set to the Abukot Elementary School in Kabayan, Benguet, and a computer set to the Bethesda Children's Home in Benguet.

Cayetano said the CRCF is donating computers to public schools in other provinces in the country. *With reports from Benjie Fernandez and Marie Tan, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

NEW CASE IN BAGUIO

DOH postpones lifting of meningo alert

BAGUIO CITY—The lifting of the meningococcemia alert here was postponed by the Department of Health after a new case cropped up last week.

Dr. Florence Reyes, head of the Baguio health department, said a nine-year-old girl was admitted at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center after complaining of stiff neck and headache on Wednesday.

"The lifting of the meningo alert is held in abeyance," said Reyes, adding that they would assess the situation and decide on the matter on Jan. 23.

But Reyes said: "The risk of developing the disease is very low from activities like tours, marketing, festivities, seminars, trainings and school classes. There is no reason to ban travel to Baguio City. Residents and visitors may go on with their daily routine."

Dr. Luningning Villa, spokesperson of the meningococcemia command post, said the new case could be a case of meningitis, a disease similar to meningococcemia but much less severe. She said the patient was suffering from stiff neck and vomiting.

Aside from high fever and the purple rashes as the only indication of meningococcemia, stiff neck and headache, telltale signs of meningitis, should also be heeded by residents, she said.

Common

Meningitis is the inflammation of the brain covering and is a more common form of meningococcal disease.

Villa said there were two cases of probable meningococcemia in Benguet. She said one is the case of the 21-year-old car wash boy in Itogon town. Another is a 34-year-old man in Tuba who was admitted at BGHMC last Friday.

Both are recovering, Villa said. She said there were no reported deaths in the Cordillera last week.

"This could mean that we have a more virulent form of meningococcal disease, probably meningitis," Villa said.

The Department of Health, World Health Organization and the National Epidemiological Center will try to standardize their data and try to classify which is meningococcemia, meningitis or other diseases, she said.

Dr. Eric Bertherat, WHO epidemiologist and meningococcal expert, said they are interested in the rising cases of meningococcemia in Baguio.

In most areas where there are outbreaks, meningitis is the most common form, he said.

Bertherat, with physicians Ma. Concepcion Roces of the Philippines, Hitoshi Oshitani of Japan and Gerald Dziekan of Germany, will be here for at least two weeks to study how meningococcemia started and spread.

The WHO weekly epidemiological record (WER) referred to the disease as "meningococcemia-like illness."

"Eight cases have been confirmed by blood culture as Neisseria meningitidis serogroup A," the WER said. "However, the clinical presentation and the high case fatality ratio observed are unusual in epidemic meningococcal disease," it added.

Same bacteria

In Manila, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said there was an emerging trend of meningitis in Baguio, an ailment less fatal than meningococcemia but caused by the same bacteria, Neisseria meningitidis.

"It's the same bacteria manifesting differently," Dayrit told reporters in an interview yesterday.

He said that from one perspective, this was good news because meningitis was "less fatal" than meningococcemia.

Meningitis has the same symptoms as meningococcemia but it does not cause purplish rashes. Its symptoms include fever, vomiting, stiffness of the neck, and cough or cold.

The DOH was set to bring down the alert level in Baguio City today, 10 days after the man from Itogon, Benguet, was initially diagnosed with meningococcemia.

Dayrit said that while the new case was meningitis, the DOH would still go by the 10-day observation period necessary to make sure that there has been no transmission of the bacteria, which has an incubation period of seven to 10 days.

The DOH would decide whether to bring down the alert level in the country's summer capital on Jan. 23.

Laboratory specialists from Canada, France and the United States would arrive in Baguio City to help in the conduct of laboratory tests, the DOH said.

The DOH command center for meningococcemia in Baguio City is already looking into the possible causes of the change in manifestation of the Neisseria meningitidis bacteria.

"This should strengthen our suggestion for the postponement of the flower festival," Dayrit said. The DOH has recommended the postponement of the annual festival, a big tourist-drawer in Baguio City due to the health situation in the city. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau and Blanche Rivera, in Manila*

NO FEAR! MENINGO IS OUTTA HERE
BAGUIO My second home, a city I am proud of
BAGUIO
BAGUIO

KOREAN youngsters join a rally to proclaim there's nothing to fear in Baguio City, not even meningococcemia.
TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Left-wing solon vows backing for probe of dam

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

TAGBILARAN CITY—Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano has given his commitment to help investigate the unfinished P120-million dam in Talibon town, according to an official of the militant group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan.

John Ruiz, Bayan secretary general in Bohol, said Mariano was merely waiting for documents and other preparations before formally calling for an inquiry.

Ruiz, also Bayan Muna provincial coordinator, was reacting to a question on what happened to the party-list group's call for an investigation of the anomalous small reservoir irrigation project in Barangay Zamora, Talibon.

Militant groups, including Bayan and party-list groups such as Anakpawis, Bayan Muna and Gabriela in the province, demanded the inquiry after the graft case filed at the Office of the Ombudsman-Visayas continued to move at a snail's pace.

Bohol Vice Gov. Julius Caesar Herrera wrote to the Visayas Ombudsman and Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo and called for a speedy resolution of the case.

The graft case was filed by Petronilo Sarigumba and the Boholanos Against Corruption, Oppression and Social Harassment.

Named respondent was Bohol provincial irrigation officer Calixto Seroje who was in charge of the project until he was relieved by engineer Modesto Membreve.

The project has not progressed beyond a handful of structures despite Seroje's admission that more than P119 million had been spent on it so far.

A National Irrigation Administration fact-finding team recommended the filing of charges for administrative liability but stopped short of naming names.

Group asks people, cops to stop vigilante killings

DAVAO CITY—A group advocating children's rights and welfare has called on the police and the public to do something to stop the killings here.

As of Sunday, a total of 25 people have been killed by suspected vigilantes.

Bernardo Mondradon, executive director of the Kabataan Consortium Incorporated, said the only way to put a stop to the murders is for the police to act on it with the full cooperation of the citizenry.

"Ironic but expected, we hear no reaction on the intensified killings from government officials or from civil society groups and the religious sector," he said in a statement.

He said killing is not only a crime against individuals but also against the state and the community.

"No motive, whether it is to maintain peace and order or vengeance, will ever justify salvaging in a society that claims to be humane and civil. The government's apparent lack of political will to solve the killings...," he said.

"Such actuations are subtle instigations of genocide," he said.

Mondradon said more tragic than the killings is the deafening silence of civil society groups and the other sectors of the Davao community.

"In candid human interactions, silence over issues is always taken to mean approval. However, we believe that most Davaoeños are against the killings but are prevented by intense fear and awe (from speaking out)," he said. *Anthony S. Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Power rate hike looms over LGU's power to tax

OZAMIZ CITY—A power rate increase looms in Misamis Occidental as local government units demand the payment of franchise tax by the electric cooperative.

This developed as debate rages between member-consumers and management on whether or not electric cooperatives should register with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA).

According to Jemilo Pelimer, general manager of Misamis Occidental II Electric Cooperative Inc. (Moelci II), the power distribution utility would pass on to electricity consumers the added operating cost once the tax is levied on it.

He said the additional cost would be distributed to consumers depending on their locality since the franchise levy was expected to vary from one local government unit to another.

Moelci II covers nine of the 14 localities of Misamis Occidental province, comprising some 50,000 member-consumers.

Demand letter

Already, the Ozamiz City local government had sent Moelci II a letter seeking to collect franchise tax amounting to P31 million from 1993 to 2004.

A source in the local government told the INQUIRER they were bent on collecting the amount because it is hard-pressed in raising local revenues to support an executive budget that is about 20 percent higher than the previous year's.

The move by the city government is seen by other localities in the province as a test case in exercising such a taxation power.

At this point, Moelci II is reviewing the franchise tax assessment of the city government to determine its basis and financial computations.

On June 10, 2003, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that electric cooperatives organized and existing under Presidential Decree 269 issued in 1973 are not genuine cooperatives as contemplated by Republic Act 6938 or the Cooperative Code of the Philippines that was enacted in 1990.

No exemptions

As such, these electric cooperatives no longer enjoy exemption from paying taxes levied by the local government units.

As a power rate increase becomes imminent, the provincial chapter of the National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms called on Moelci II management to enforce measures aimed at registering the utility with the CDA, the sole cooperative-registering body under the Cooperative Code.

The Code provides exemption from the payment of taxes for CDA-registered cooperatives.

Consumer rights advocate Virgilio Sandoval, president of Kalihukan sa Mabinantayong Konsumante, also reminded Moelci II of the Supreme Court's suggestion that electric cooperatives seek the assistance of proper authorities to convert them into genuine cooperatives covered by RA 6938.

Moelci II management, however, continues to shun the proposal, adopting a similar stance as that of majority of electric cooperatives throughout the country.

Pelimer said the matter of registering the electric cooperatives with the CDA must be a collective choice of all electric cooperatives, not just by Moelci II and a few others. *Ryan D. Rosauro, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Rookie cop slain, 6 others hurt in ambush by NPAs

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—A rookie policeman was killed while six others, including another rookie cop, were wounded in an ambuscade allegedly perpetrated by the communist-led New People's Army in a remote village in Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro yesterday.

Chief Supt. Alejandro Lapinid, Mimaropa police director, identified the lone fatality as PO1 Amado Acurong.

His companion, PO1 Teofilo Casibal, and five other civilians were wounded in the attack, Lapinid said.

The two were members of the Abra de Ilog Municipal Police Office.

Lapinid said the two policemen were on their way to the Abra de Ilog port to man the police detachment at the pier when they saw a dump truck of the Tagala Construction Corp. and asked the driver for a ride.

While traversing a hilly portion in Sitio Urilan, Barangay Lumang Bayan at about 10 a.m., around 20 armed men appeared from nowhere and opened fire at the truck they were riding.

"Acurong and Casibal were really caught unaware. They were unable to retaliate," Lapinid told the INQUIRER in a mobile phone interview.

He said Acurong died on the spot from three fatal wounds in the back while Casibal suffered gunshot wounds in the arms.

He said the suspected NPA rebels retreated to the mountains immediately after the shooting.

Lapinid said they are now closely working with members of the Army's 204th Infantry Brigade in pursuit of the rebels.

The attack came just five days after communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal owned up the killing of former Quezon provincial police chief Supt. Eduardo Sebastian in Lucena City.

During the Communist Party of the Philippines' anniversary last month, Rosal vowed of heightened attacks against government troops. *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Third Nida slay witness surfaces

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice is set to start a preliminary investigation against a woman who was allegedly one of the brains behind the killing of actress Nida Blanca, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

Gonzalez said the DOJ would investigate the woman after the government's third new witness in the case, Ranny Francisco, 35, a former tabloid employee, positively identified her as one of the three persons who "escorted" Blanca out of the Atlanta Centre building hours before she was murdered.

Francisco's testimony is expected to fill in the unaccounted time before Blanca's body was found in the early morning of Nov. 7, 2001 with several stab wounds.

Gonzalez declined to name the woman, but said she had been invited before by the National Bureau of Investigation for questioning. Francisco, who was fetched from Marinduque by the NBI to testify, said the woman "looked old" and was about 60 to 65 years old.

Gonzalez declined to say if the suspect was a close associate of Blanca, but later said that no one could tell him whom to include in the charge sheet, even if a suspect is related to Blanca.

Francisco had also identified missing businessman Mike Martinez as one of the two men who was with the female suspect. Gonzalez said that the NBI had received reports that Martinez was still alive and that its agents were looking for him.

The new witness said he was on his way to the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board office at the Atlanta Centre on the afternoon of Nov. 6, 2001 when he saw Blanca accompanied by the suspects.

He was going to the MTRCB to have some still movie picture advertisements approved by the censors body, he said.

Francisco said he got off on the sixth floor, where the car park was located, because he needed to take a leak. NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said that the NBI recovered urine samples at the crime scene and would check if these were Francisco's.

The witness had allegedly taken a leak near Blanca's car and later saw Blanca walking between two men with the woman behind her at 5:08 p.m.

Francisco said he recognized Blanca and contacted the NBI when he learned she had been murdered, but he did not give any testimony because he was frightened.

Witness Anji Dalandas earlier said that she saw four men transfer an unconscious Blanca from a van into her car at past 1 a.m. on Nov. 7.

She identified three of the four men as Rod Strunk, Blanca's husband, Philip Medel Jr., and Martinez.

Transport groups declare war vs BF

By Irene C. Perez

NOW it's an army of transport groups against Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando.

Nine transport groups filed yesterday a 20-day Temporary Restraining Order in a Makati Regional Trial Court against three Metro Manila Development Authority programs they said were "excessive and confiscatory."

These are the Philippine Confederation of Drivers and Operators-Alliance of Concerned Transport Operators (PCDO-ACTO), Alliance of Transport Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines (Altodap), Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association (Fejodap), Makati Jeepney Operator and Driver Alliance (MJODA), Integrated Metro Bus Operators Association (Imboa), North East Manila Bus Operators Group (Nembog) and Provincial Bus Operators Association of the Philippines (PBOAP).

John Robert Baun of Angono, Rizal, and Monico Agustin also signed the complaint.

In a 17-page petition, lawyers Vigor Mendoza and Dominic Mendoza of Malcolm Law Office sought to curb the MMDA's No Physical Contact Policy, the Edsa Organized Bus Route Project and the Metropolitan Traffic Ticket System.

"We question the power of the MMDA and Bayani Fernando to issue ordinances," Mendoza said.

He said the groups are also seeking the abolition of the commission and Fernando's resignation.

The MMDA's policies are "baseless, irregular and lacked due process," Vigor Mendoza added.

Kalibo rampage: neuro-psychiatric test for cops

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

PO2 JONATHAN Moreno, who massacred his superiors and fellow cops and a 10-year-old girl in Kalibo, Aklan in the midst of the Ati-atihan festival, was said to have "totally gone nuts."

If Moreno went crazy, then the culprit is the neuro-psychiatric or NP test given to police applicants and those already in the service.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) doesn't give much value to the results of NP test. Many police applicants failed the NP exam, yet they were accepted because some high police officials or politicians vouched for them.

Worse, the police applicants who failed bribed the people who gave the NP test.

In short, the NP test doesn't count for much because it's just given pro forma.

* * *

The screening process of police applicants in the PNP is not strict. Applicants in the provinces get into the police service easier than their counterparts in Metro Manila.

For example, PO1 Alvin Verchez, who molested the daughters of his live-in partner, ages 8 and 14, failed the neuro-psychiatric exam in Metro Manila the first time he applied.

Somebody suggested Verchez make another try in the provinces, which he did. He applied at the regional police headquarters in Palo, Leyte and passed the NP test.

Now, Verchez is in hiding after I brought the rape and molestation complaints against him with the PNP higher-ups.

* * *

PO1 Moreno was reportedly under tremendous pressure from some people to desist from testifying against a suspected big-time drug lord in Western Visayas, Jose Kim "Boy" Cuadra.

But who were pressuring Moreno, that's the 64-dollar question.

Moreno had arrested Cuadra for possession of illegal drugs. Cuadra is now in jail awaiting trial.

It can no longer be known why Moreno had to take it out on his own boss, Aklan provincial director Supt. Oderlardo Magayanes, and Chief Insp. Manuel Ilejay, Kalibo police chief.

Could it be that when Moreno cracked up and brandished his M-16 Armalite, the two top police officers were easy targets because they were on hand?

I first heard the name of Boy Cuadra from my sources at the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP).

ISAFP has dossiers on Cuadra's activities. But the agency could not arrest him because going after drug pushers and traffickers is the job of the PNP.

During the time of President Erap, Cuadra was reportedly enjoying protection from a top PNP official.

* * *

Charges against suspected drug traffickers and pushers were dismissed by court judges after policemen who were supposed to testify against them did not attend hearings.

Why did the policemen, whose testimony was vital in sending the suspect to prison, fail to attend the hearings?

The answer is simple: they were bribed into not attending.

Policemen who deliberately absent themselves from court proceedings involving drugs should be dismissed from the service outright.

BOC DONATION The Customs Anti-Smuggling Group donated more than P100M worth of smuggled used clothing seized in Muntinlupa City to the Department of Social Welfare and Development. In photo are DSWD Secretary Corazon Soliman (2nd from left), BOC Deputy Commissioner Reynaldo Nicolas and Deputy Executive Secretary Waldo Flores.

'Kariton boys' to help collect trash

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

"KARITON boys" in Caloocan will soon be tapped to help improve garbage collection in the city.

"Kariton boys" are teenagers who collect trash from houses for a fee using wooden carts to store the garbage. But the problem starts when they dump their collection in the streets outside scheduled garbage collection hours. Piles of garbage accumulate and become an eyesore until the dump trucks arrive the following day to collect the rubbish.

But under the proposed scheme now being studied by the Caloocan City environment and sanitation services, the "kariton boys" will soon be part of the solution.

Department head Al Sta. Maria told the INQUIRER they were studying the possibility of organizing the "kariton boys" to collect garbage, especially from houses located in areas not reached by garbage trucks.

The "kariton boys" would then transfer their collection to the garbage trucks.

If the proposal is approved, the new system would be operational by next month.

Peace, for now, for 2 parking lot contenders

By Luige A. del Puerto

IT TOOK the top man of Pasig City himself to forge a temporary peace between two wealthy groups fighting over a stretch of parking space inside busy Ortigas Center in Pasig City yesterday.

Mayor Vicente Eusebio arrived on Pearl Drive around 5:30 p.m. and personally drove away men from two warring groups who were in the thick of battle.

On one hand was the group of Leonardo Umale, owner of Pearl Plaza, a commercial establishment near the University of Asia and Pacific.

On the other was Creekside Park Inc., the company that was awarded a contract by the Ortigas Company to manage the parking slot after Umale's contract with Ortigas expired.

Also on the side of Creekside was Casimiro Ynares III, who said he was a personal friend of the Creekside owners.

The Ynareses own Manila Luxury, a residential condominium located at the end of Pearl Drive.

Creekside has hired Superb Security Agency, reportedly run by a son of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, to handle their security concerns.

"This cannot be," a visibly perplexed Eusebio told 30 men from the Umale group and about 20 full armed guards from Superb.

"You are turning this area into a war zone, and I cannot allow that to happen," he said.

On Saturday, a heated confrontation between Umale and his two sons, and Superb security men ended with the wounding of security officer Jelly Deoneda who was shot in the right shoulder.

He is now recuperating in a nearby hospital.

Police said they still do not have a suspect in the shooting incident.

BOHOL I ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Maca-as, Tubigon, Bohol
Tel./Fax No. (038) 508-8095, 508-0084, 508-0085

INVITATION FOR BIDS NO. 2005-02

The **BOHOL I ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (BOHECO-I)** thru 5% reinvestment and construction fund from BOHECO I intends to procure various Electrical materials and equipment for Line rehabilitation and extension of Distribution lines under its coverage area.

LOT 1 - LINE HARDWARES: Double Arming, 5/8"x22" - 200 pcs.; Double Arming, 5/8"x24" - 300 pcs.; Double Upset, 5/8"x10" - 110 pcs.; Double Upset, 5/8"x12" - 100 pcs.; Carriage, 3/8"x4-1/2" - 1,000 pcs.; Oval Eye, 5/8"x09" - 100 pcs.; Oval Eye, 5/8"x10" - 250 pcs.; Machine, 1/2"x06" - 500 pcs.; Machine, 1/2"x12" - 400 pcs.; Machine, 5/8"x14" - 300 pcs.; Machine, 5/8"x16" - 200 pcs.; Single Upset, 5/8" x 09" - 100 pcs.; Single Upset, 5/8"x10" - 200 pcs.; Single Upset, 5/8"x12" - 50 pcs.; Brace, Crossarm, Steel, 28" Long - 800 pcs.; Bracket, Secondary Angle - 800 pcs.; Clamp, Deadend Stram #4-4/0 ACSR - 150 pcs.; Clamp, Pole, CA type, 5" to 7" - 80 pcs.; Clamp, Pole, CA type, 8" to 9" - 80 pcs.; Clevis, Secondary Swinging - 900 pcs.; Pin, Crossarm, Long Shank, 1" Thread Lead Head, 5/8"x14-3/4" (Shank Dia. - 7/8" See Attached) - 1,000 pcs.; Pin, Pole Top, Channel, 1" Thread Lead Head, 20" - 500 pcs.; Rod, Anchor, Threaded, Single Eye, 5/8"x7ft. - 350 pcs.; Attachment, Guy, Malleable Iron, Galv. 11/16" Hole Dia. - 500 pcs.; Connector, Ground Rod (Clamp) 5/8", Galv - 300 pcs. **LOT 2 - WIRES AND CONDUCTORS:** Bare, ACSR #1/0 AWG - 30,000 Mtrs.; Bare, ACSR #2 AWG - 40,000 Mtrs.; Bare, ACSR #4 AWG - 15,000 Mtrs.; Duplex Wire #6 AWG - 100,000 Mtrs.; Tie, Aluminum, Soft, #4 AWG - 10,000 Feet; Ground, Aluminum, Solid, EC Grade #4 - 10,000 Feet; Grounding, 5/16", 3 Strand, Steel, Galvanized - 10,000 Feet; Guy, 3/8", 7 Strand, Steel, Galvanized - 20,000 Feet; **LOT 3 - CONNECTOR COMPRESSION AND ARMOR RODS:** YHO2, Burndy - 8,000 pcs.; YPC2A8U, Burndy - 10,000 Pcs.; #4/0, 60" 11/Set - 500 pcs.; #1/0, 52", 9/Set - 500 pcs.; #2/0, 52", 9/Set - 500 pcs.; **LOT 4 - FUSE CUTOUT & ARRESTER COMBINATION:** Single Shot, 15KV, 200 Amperes, US Made AB Chance/ABB - 100 pcs.; 9/10KV US Made (Cutout-ABB/AB Chance 100 Amps, Arrester - Ohio Brass 9/10KV - 200 Set; **LOT 5 - STEEL POLES:** 30 Feet - 100 pcs.; 35 Feet - 100 pcs., 40 Feet - 50 pcs.; 50 Feet - 30 pcs.; **LOT 6 - DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMERS:** 10Kva, 7620/240V - 30 pcs.; 15Kva, 7620/240V - 20 pcs.; 25Kva, 7620/240V - 18 pcs.; 37.5Kva, 7620/240V - 15 pcs.; 50Kva, 7620/240V - 6 pcs.; 75Kva, 7620/240V - 3 pcs.

Sealed bids for the supply and delivery of the above-mention materials will be received by **BOHECO-I** at its main office in Maca-as, Tubigon, Bohol on or before February 01, 2005 at 2:30 p.m. at which time and place said proposal would be opened and read in the presence of bidders or their representative who choose to attend.

The interested bidders may obtain information, secure list of bidding documents from **BOHECO-I** Main Office upon payment of a non-refundable fee of One Thousand and Two Hundred Pesos (Php 1,200.00).

(Sgd.) **CARLOS B. ITABLE**
General Manager

(PDI - Jan 18, 2005)

DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines will receive sealed bids on January 26, 2005, 2:00 p.m., Auditorium of the DBP Head Office, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City for the following properties on CASH BASIS:

CODE REAL ESTATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	MINIMUM BID
MANILA			
AM-MC-001	No. 38 Road 7, Project 6, Quezon City	403.7 m² residential lot (TCT No. N-234441) with bldg. & imp.	P 4,825,425.00
BATAAN			
	Sta Monica Homes, Sitio Wiswis Camaya, Marivelas:	Residential lots with bldg. & imp.	
AM-ED-002	Lot - 7 & 10 Blk - 32	100 m² TCT No. T-229503 & T-229504	P 332,000.00
AM-ED-003	15 20	100 m² TCT No. T-229481	P 283,700.00
AM-ED-004	6 9	50 m² TCT No. T-229483	P 190,000.00
BATANGAS			
	Brgy. Lumbang, Calaca	Vacant industrial lots:	
AM-JA-005a	Lot 26-A	97,314 m² TCT No. T-100654	P87,582,600.00
AM-JA-005b	Lot 26-B	30,448 m² TCT No. T-100653	P27,403,200.00
BULACAN			
AM-MC-006	Bo. Pungo, Calumpit, Bulacan	6,913 m² agricultural lot (TCT No. T-155594)	P 5,530,000.00
CABANATUAN			
	Vista Amor Subdivision, Bangad	Residential lots with bldg. & imp.:	
AM-MC-007	Blk. 2 Lot 45	100 m² TCT No. T-116963	P 411,500.00
AM-MC-008	2 7	100 m² TCT No. T-116962	P 375,000.00
AM-MC-009	1 7	100 m² TCT No. T-116961	P 353,300.00
AM-MC-010	1 16	100 m² TCT No. T-116960	P 353,300.00
CAVITE			
AM-PY-011	Lot 3 Blk 9, Regino St., Prima Homes Bucandala III, Brgy. Alapan, Imus	41 m² residential lot (TCT No. T-103689) with bldg. & imp.	P 190,200.00
AM-PY-012	Lot 25 Blk. 11, Philhomes Ville I, Brgy. Toclong, Kawit	32 m² residential lot (TCT No. T-1087340) with bldg. & imp.	P 188,800.00
LAGUNA			
STR-001	Brgy. Caingin, Sta. Rosa	642 m² commercial/residential lot (TCT T-478025) with bldg. & imp.	P 1,969,600.00
	St. Joseph Village 6, Phase I Bulong, Cabuyao	Residential lots with bldg. & imp.:	
AM-PY-013	Lot - 37 Blk - 5	80 m² TCT No. T-584443	P 490,300.00
AM-PY-014	9 3	40 m² TCT No. T-584430	P 201,800.00
AM-PY-015	9 14	40 m² TCT No. T-584431	P 200,000.00
AM-PY-016	12 8	40 m² TCT No. T-584429	P 200,000.00
MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL			
AM-PY-017	Ozamis-Oroquieta National Highway, Lapasan, Clarin	866 m² residential lot (TCT No, T-12935) with bldg. & imp.	P 316,300.00
QUEZON			
AM-CP-018	Morong, Sariaya	50,299 m² interior agricultural lot (TCT No 392733)	P 1,257,500.00
RIZAL			
AM-PY-019	Lincoln Drive, Brgy. Mayamot, Antipolo	8 parcels residential lots (TCT No. 317013 to 317020) 5,029 m² with bldg. & imp	P 5,119,600.00
CHATTELS (sale on "as-is, where-is " basis)			
AM-CP-020	Serg's Compound, Ortigas Ave., Cainta Rizal	One (1) unit Hydrostatic Five -Roll Refiner Machine Registration 7898, "C&M" for chocolate masses, cream compounds.	P 4,889,500.00
AM-MC-021	Bo. Umpucan, San Ildefonso, Bulacan	Various poultry equipment for three (3) breeder houses	P 1,467,000.00
AM-PY-022	DBP Depot, Doña Severina Compound Parañaque	One (1) unit 10-wheeler ISUZU delivery truck Model 10, PCI V-type	P 200,000.00

BIDDERS ARE REMINDED:

1. To inspect the properties to determine their actual condition before the bidding;
2. To submit in DBP's official bid form available at the AMD-Acquired Assets, 2nd Floor, DBP Head Office during office hours; and
3. To be on time No bids will be accepted once unsealing of the bids commences. The sale shall be subject to other terms and conditions which may be imposed by the Bank.

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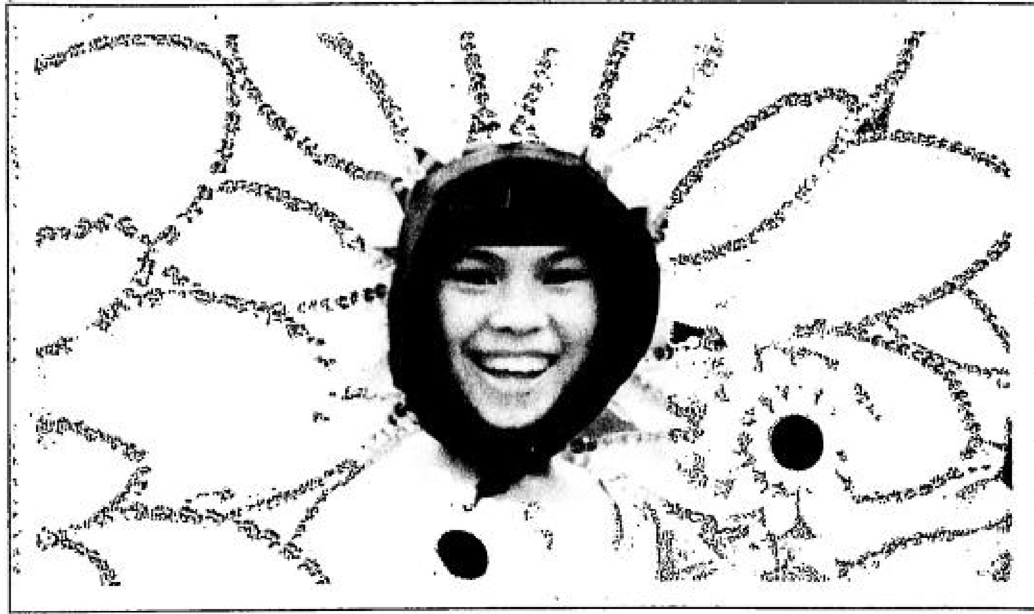

MARDI GRAS IN METRO. A young girl joins Makati residents for the Sunday celebration of Caracol 2005, an annual parade celebrating the city's cultural heritage.

REM ZAMORA

'Brides' rescued

By Leila B. Salaverria

AN ALLEGED mail-order bride syndicate was busted by the National Bureau of Investigation Sunday with the arrest of six Koreans and five Filipinos, following a barrage of complaints from their victims.

Thirty-two Filipino women were also rescued from the Parañaque City office of the Shing Sung Consulting and General Services when the NBI conducted the raid.

The NBI also seized several passports, videotapes, pictures of wedding ceremonies and application forms from the office.

The arrested Koreans, who were presented to the media yesterday, were identified as An Hak Sun, 49; Cho Young Jin, 33; Kim Jung Hun, 32; Kim Seuing Chan, 23; Oh Yeon Dong, 33; and Lee Young Seung, 29. Also arrested were Jenny Ann, 35, wife of An Hak Sun; Cunneth Bogaoit, 36; Maricar Fajaron, 44; Imelda Sia, 37; and Bing Manalo, 27.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said the group was allegedly responsible for matching Filipino women with Koreans for a fee. The Koreans refused to tell the NBI how much the service cost.

After the wedding, the new brides were brought to Korea where they were allegedly abused or left on their own.

NBI antihuman trafficking chief Romulo Asis said the group would first encourage women to apply for a match-marriage arrangement with Koreans, luring them with promises of a better future.

After passing the group's selection process, they are then interviewed by their prospective grooms.

The women later undergo a medical examination and are made to complete travel documents. The group would then arrange the wedding, complete with a honeymoon in the Philippines.

The bride's parents would also be given P20,000 as a token, while the recruiter receives P10,000. Once the bride's visa is approved, she is given the go signal to travel to Korea with her husband.

However, many of the women start packing up for home because they had allegedly been maltreated in their new homes.

Wycoco claimed there was even a stipulation in the marriage contract stating that the bride would have to pay her groom $3,000 should she decide to leave him, or should the marriage fail.

'Wet flag' up; Makati rains on BF parade

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE MAKATI City government yesterday rained on the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority's parade when Mayor Jejomar Binay ordered the city's public safety department to arrest MMDA personnel implementing the "wet flag" scheme.

"We are duty bound to do everything to stop the commission of a crime," Binay said in a statement, stressing that the MMDA scheme had no legal basis to implement the scheme.

But MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said they would go ahead with their plan despite threats from Metro mayors. "We really cannot do anything if they arrest our personnel," Fernando said yesterday while assessing the first day of the scheme's implementation.

"We could post bail and hire lawyers for them, but that would not prevent us from continuing the project so we could teach pedestrians to use the sidewalks and refrain them from blocking the roads," he added as he challenged human rights activists and Metro Manila mayors against the scheme to identify the project's disadvantages.

No recourse

"We have not thought of any other way to discipline unruly pedestrians who are the main cause of Metro Manila's heavy traffic," Fernando said. He added, "No human rights were violated with this scheme because controlling the crowd with wet flags is no different from blowing a warning whistle."

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday expressed her confidence in Fernando. "I do not micromanage," Ms Arroyo said when asked in a dzRH interview if she gave the go-signal for the implementation of the scheme. She said such "tactical moves" are left to the member of the Cabinet like Fernando.

'Good mayor'

"But I want to remind the people how good Bayani was as a mayor of Marikina," Ms Arroyo said, adding that when she was recruiting Fernando to head the MMDA, he asked what her marching orders would be. "I told him, 'Bayani, I hope you can do for Metro Manila what you did to transform Marikina into a beautiful, progressive and model city'," Ms Arroyo said.

The MMDA chief said the agency has deployed 15 mobile units bearing large white flags measuring seven by five feet to be used against pedestrians who stray from designated areas. MMDA personnel would periodically pour water on the flags to drive away pedestrians from the road, especially in busy thoroughfares like Edsa and Commonwealth Avenue.

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. however, said he is willing to give the agency a chance to implement the policy in his turf. "I'm not in favor of it, but I welcome the initiative. Let's see what happens." *With Juliet Labog-Javellana and Tina G. Santos*

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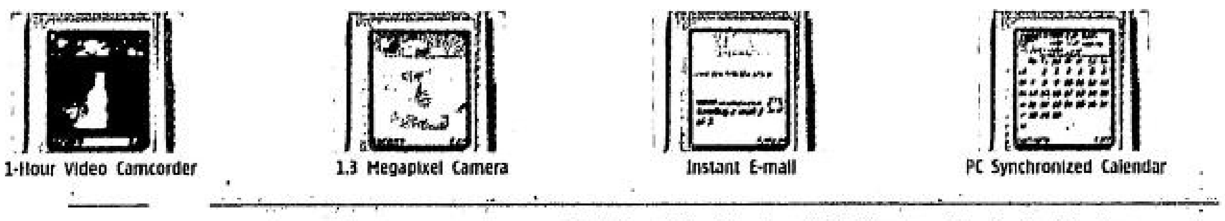
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SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

TENNIS: 2005 Australian Open First Round; 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.; Day 2 Highlights; 10 p.m.: Star Sports—Tennis action continues in the centennial edition of this year's first Grand Slam event of the year.

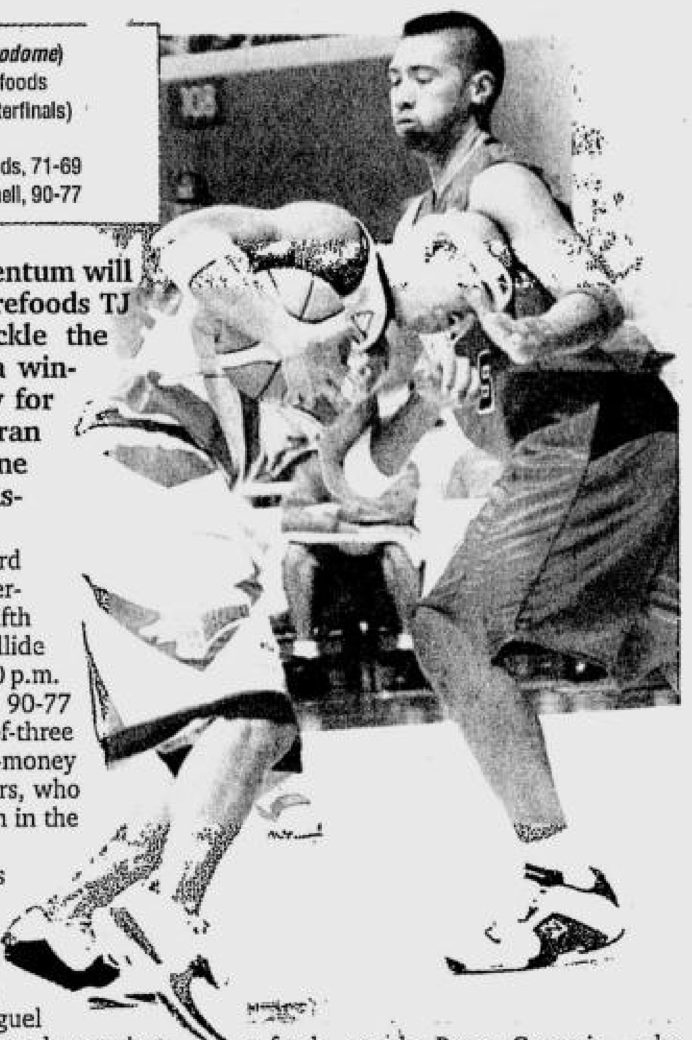
BASKETBALL: US NCAA—UConn vs Seton Hall; 8 a.m.; Oklahoma State vs. Texas; 10 a.m.; ESPN—The Huskies take on the Pirates while the Cowboys hope to lasso the Longhorns.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

P'foods, Shell dispute semis slot

GAME TODAY (*Cuneta Astrodome*)
7:20 p.m.—Shell vs Purefoods
(Game 3, best-of-three quarterfinals)

Game 1—Shell d. Purefoods, 71-69
Game 2—Purefoods d. Shell, 90-77



THEY'RE tired but momentum will be on the side of the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs when they tackle the Shell Turbochargers in a winner-take-all match today for a semifinal seat in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome.

The Hotdogs, in their third do-or-die game in the conference, will be playing for the fifth time in six days when they collide with the Turbochargers at 7:20 p.m.

But with their resounding 90-77 victory in Game 2 of the best-of-three series, the Hotdogs are wise-money choices over the Turbochargers, who escaped with a 71-69 decision in the opener.

The winner advances against Talk 'N Text in one of two semifinal pairings scheduled tomorrow. The first semifinal duel was sealed Sunday when San Miguel Beer eliminated Alaska and moved up against Barangay Ginebra.

The Gin Kings and the Phone Pals, the top two teams in the eliminations, go into the best-of-five semifinals well rested. The finals will be a best-of-seven affair.

"We are not in this situation the past two years, so it's going to be a good test of character and resiliency for the team," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio, who steered the TJ Hotdogs to the 2002 Governors Cup title.

It was the last time Purefoods figured in the playoffs, having finished the last six conferences no higher than eighth place.

"I was right," said Shell coach Leo Austria. "That 24-hour rest spelled the difference for Purefoods. Now, it's our turn to adjust by correcting our mistakes in Game 2."

Austria was referring to the one-day rest the Hotdogs enjoyed after bowing to Shell in Game 1. Purefoods went into that game a night after surviving Coca-Cola in another rubber match in the wildcard phase.

Ronald Tubid, who rode the bench in Game 2, will most likely see action today. He missed Shell's last three games due to a hamstring injury.

Tony Dela Cruz, Billy Mamaril, Rich Alvarez and Kalani Ferreria will surely be back with a vengeance as the Turbochargers try to barge into the semifinals for the first time since the 2001 Governors Cup.

"We'll be ready in Game 3," said Gregorio, who got a huge lift from James Yap, Tonyboy Espinosa and Richard Yee in Game 2.

"We will limit our turnovers because Shell will definitely pounce on it." *June Navarro*

NIC Belasco (left) of San Miguel barges into Alaska's Don Allado during their game Sunday won by the Beermen. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Stricter rules for Fil-foreign PBA hopefuls

By June Navarro

THE PBA Board of Governors yesterday imposed stricter eligibility requirements for foreign-born players hoping to enter the league through the rookie draft.

Commissioner Noli Eala said foreign-born applicants would be interviewed and asked to submit several citizenship documents proving his Filipino lineage on or before the deadline on May 1.

Eala explained that it would give the league, particularly the teams, more time to scrutinize the papers of the aspirants before including them in the final list of draftees for the 2005 rookie draft in June.

Teams will also have 30 days, from the time the league releases the roster of aspirants, to contest the eligibility of the player if they found his documents to be spurious.

"This allows the PBA to screen the applicants and at the same time pass on the burden of proof to the foreign-born players," said Eala.

Fil-foreign applicants will have to secure a Bureau of Immigration certificate of recognition, Department of Justice affirmation, authentic birth certificate issued by the National Statistics Office if he's born locally or an equivalent document if born outside of the country.

The foreign hopefuls must also play at least 25 games in a local league before the PBA releases the final list of draftees.

Meanwhile, national team coach Chot Reyes has already presented his program to the PBA board, which will act on it, along with the budgetary requirements of the RP squad, next week.

In another development, the PBA will hold its first overseas game in Jakarta, Indonesia, on March 6. Eala said the PBA is looking at Hong Kong and the Middle East as its next destinations.

FG again turns to godfathers of RP sports

SPORTS godfathers will take the spotlight today when First Gentleman Mike Arroyo holds the first in a series of pledging sessions to raise funds for the country's athletes seeing action in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games later this year.

Executives of government and private firms invited by Mr. Arroyo to lend a hand

FG/A18

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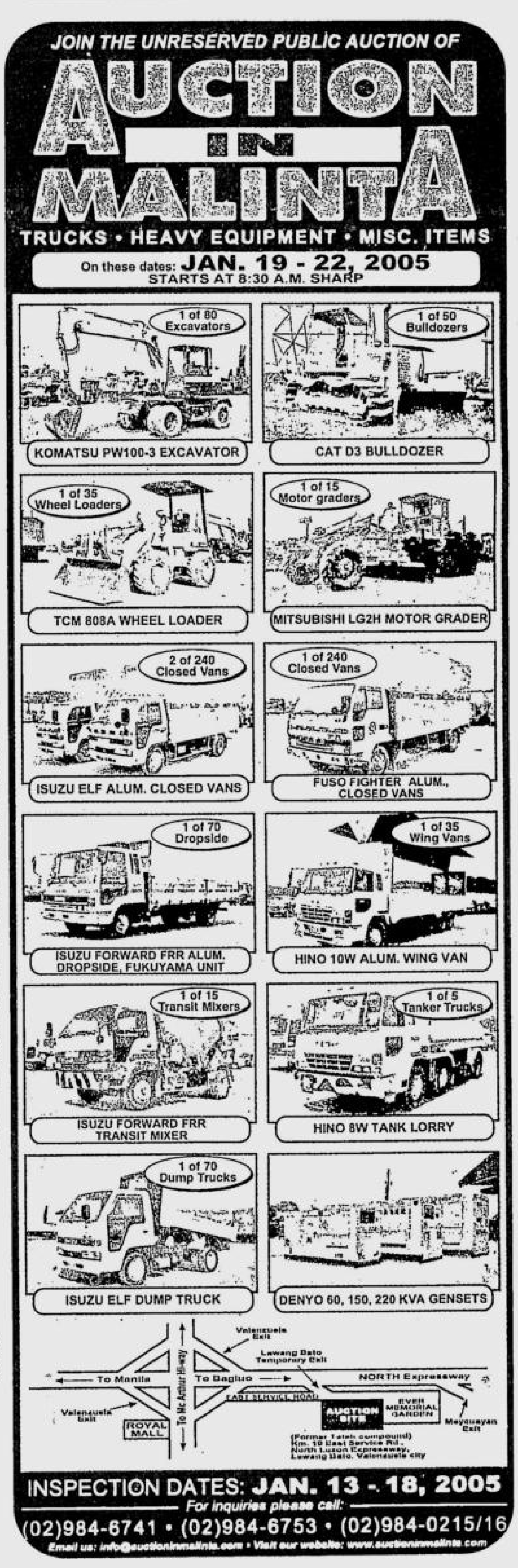
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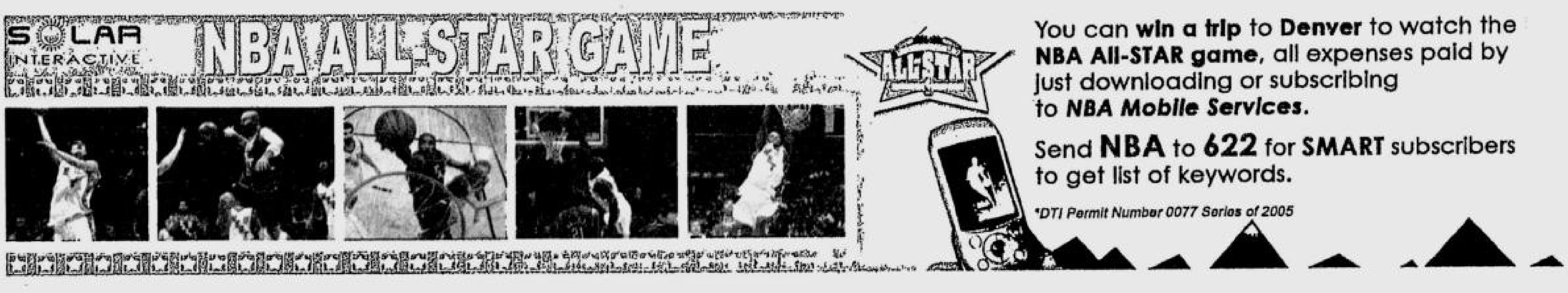
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Tortillos seek semis slot vs Eagles today

GAMES TODAY (*Pasig Sports Center*)
2 p.m.—AMP-Ateneo vs Granny Goose
4 p.m.—ICTSI-La Salle vs Welcoat

COACH Jun Tan knows his Granny Goose Tortillos have exceeded their modest expectations in the PBL Open Championship.

In a span of three months, he has turned his relatively unknown roster into one of the league's finest by finishing third at the end of the elimination round.

But the Tortillos are not stopping there as they vie for a semifinal slot against the resurgent AMP-Ateneo at 2 p.m. today at the Pasig Sports Center.

"We'll do everything to finish the series right away," said Tan, whose Tortillos own a twice-to-beat edge over the Eagles. "We don't want to give them the chance because if we do, we'll surely have a hard time."

"The boys are playing better," added Tan. "It's a good sign going into the quarterfinals."

The signs, though, aren't exactly in Welcoat's favor as the Paintmasters seem headed for another tough time against quarterfinal foe ICTSI-La Salle at 4 p.m.

"It's hard but it's not impossible to beat Welcoat," said coach Franz Pumaren after the Archers narrowly made it to the playoffs by stunning the Paintmasters, 95-89, in overtime last Saturday.

The Archers, however, need to pull off

two more upsets over Welcoat to enter the semifinals.

And Pumaren knows that it's quite a tall order. "Welcoat is capable of coming back," he said. "Their bench players can actually be starters for other teams."

Awaiting the playoff winners in a best-of-three semifinal series are defending champion Magnolia-FEU and Montaña.

The Wizards topped the eliminations with an 11-3 record, while the Jewels took the second spot at 10-4.

Granny Goose swept AMP-Ateneo in the eliminations, but coach Sandy Arespacochaga believes the momentum is on the Eagles' side.

"We lost to Granny Goose twice but my players are playing well of late and that's our advantage," said Arespacochaga, whose Eagles closed the second round with three straight wins. Jasmine W. Payo

BULL-STRONG JR Quiñahan (right) is expected to provide the defense Granny Goose will need to stop AMP-Ateneo's usually explosive shooters in tonight's game. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

FG again turns to godfathers of RP sports

From page A17

in the buildup of Pinoy athletes are expected to attend the affair starting at 11 a.m. at the Heroes' Hall of Malacañang.

Sports officials and representatives of the first batch of athletes, who passed the stringent criteria laid down by the Medalyang Ginto Executive Council of the First Gentleman Foundation that screened the athletes recommended by the country's national sports associations, will also join the event.

A total of 248 athletes, led by gold medalists in the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games in 2003 and various international events, make up the first batch of beneficiaries to be known as "Team Tagumpay."

Leading the executives invited by Mr. Arroyo are officials of Globe, Smart and Philippine Airlines, firms that have come up with fund-raising efforts through promotional activities.

A similar fund-raising affair held by Mr. Arroyo in 2003 raised more than P22 million that financed the training of athletes for the Vietnam SEA Games.

Encounter with Jinggoy

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

WAS I glad I bumped into Senator Jinggoy Estrada a while back. It's been quite sometime when we last saw each other.

Was it in Calasiao, Pangasinan, when he was campaigning for his Senate seat last May?

"I guess so," he said. "We shook hands at a hotel lobby there, had a little chat amid the din of people set to join a big rally before I motored to Lingayen for the *miting de avance*. We never had enough time to make *kuwentuhan*."

He was right.

Before that, our last encounter was in 2000 in Australia, during the Sydney Olympics. He was there to give our athletes a surprise visit in a bid to boost their morale; I was there covering the Games—an assignment described by golfer Rick Gibson "very enviable."

Not known to many, Jinggoy is a hardcore sports buff.

Basketball used to be Jinggoy's game—until a knee injury sidelined him for good.

"In a way, I am like my Dad," said Jinggoy, referring to his father, Erap. "But unlike him, only my right knee got injured. My Dad's two knees were that bad that both needed to be operated on. Doctors had to implant titanium in his knees because the muscles serving as cushion to the bones *doon ay gastado na*. When they opened his knees, water squirted out like water from a faucet."

He said Erap gained nearly two inches in height after the operation because "he is no longer bowlegged," a result, he said, of the deformed knees "that hurt him while walking before the operation."

In 2000, Jinggoy was chair of the organizing committee of the smashingly successful World Volleyball Grand Prix in Manila. A former movie star himself like his Dad, Jinggoy almost made a film opposite the lovely and extremely popular Leila Barros of the Brazil volleyball team. The film was shelved when Leila's Brazilian boyfriend then objected vehemently. After Leila's stint in Sydney that year, she married her boyfriend—only to divorce him two years later.

Jinggoy used to own the San Juan Knights in the defunct MBA basketball league. Three of his players then are now playing in the PBA—Kalani Fererria of Shell, Omanzie Rodriguez of Red Bull and Rafi Reavis of Coca-Cola.

But even if he's in the Senate now, his heart still throbs for sports. As proof, he's been donating his monthly salary of almost P32,000 to seven athletes now training for the November SEA Games in Manila. It started last July.

"It may be a small amount, but it's my humble way of showing my concern for our athletes," he said. "For as long as I am around, I will do my own share to uplift our athletes in particular and Philippine sports in general."

He said that had he been given the chance, he would have wanted to chair the Senate's sports committee.

"But I am from the opposition party and we are the minority," he said with a chuckle.

Lito Lapid got the position.

A boon, bane, for Philippine sport?

Your call, fellas.

***

FASTBREAK. The 5th Mayor Alfonso Soriano Cup, a 110-km cycling event featuring some of the country's finest road cyclists, will be held on Friday in Malasiqui, Pangasinan, as part of the town fiesta celebration on Saturday and Sunday. Malasiqui has produced basketball great Romulo Mamaril, the father of Billy who now plays for Shell in the PBA, not to mention the famous actress Donita Rose and the late singer Ric Segreto. Maritess Bitbit, a mainstay of the RP Women's Cycling Team to the SEA Games, is also from Malasiqui. Good luck, Mayor!

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Tuesday, January 18, 2005

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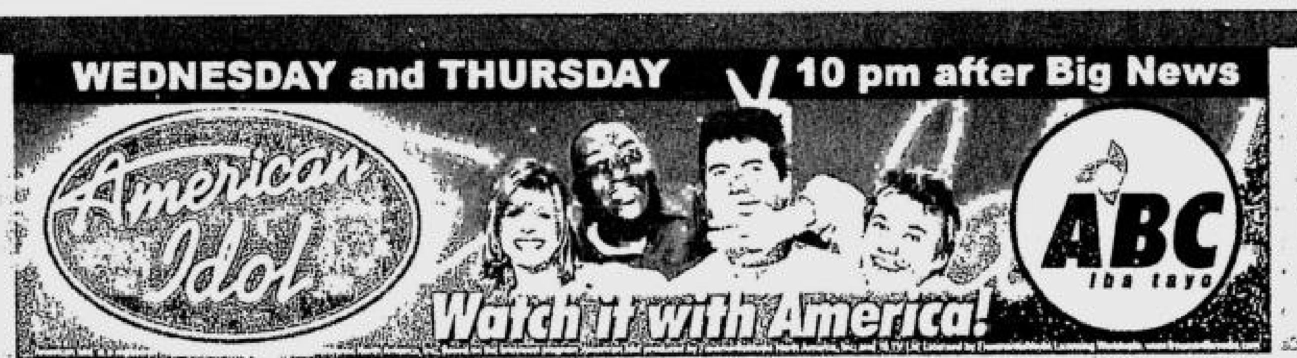

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ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Spirits	Krystala	Lovers In Paris	Hiram	Star Circle Nat'l Teen Quest	Bida Si Mister Bida Si Misis			Insider	Pipol
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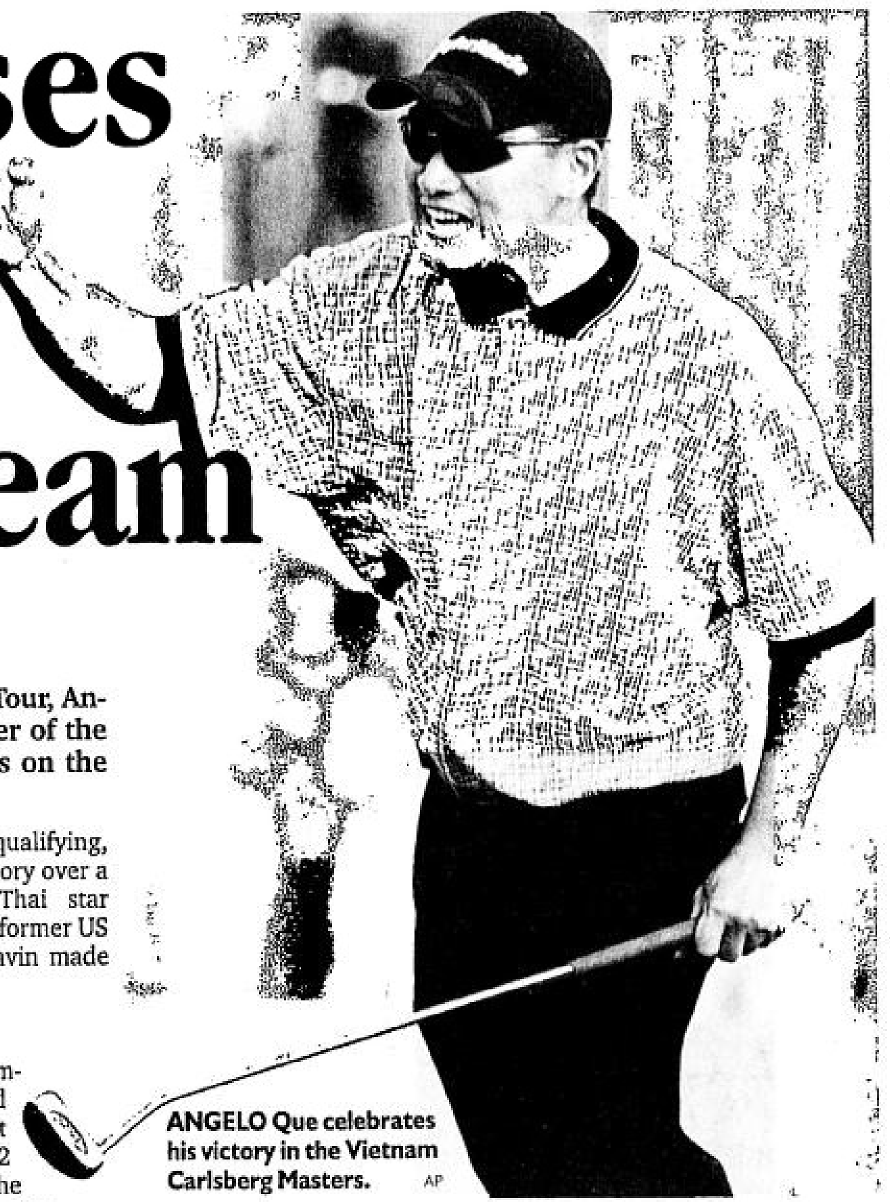
Solar		Wwe Raw				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Mastazel	Dungeons And Dragons	Stargate SG1		Soldier Of Fortune		RHD/LA		The Wire		Oz	
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix		100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd				Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Top Of The Pops	MYX Remakes	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Meet My Folks		The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	Knock First	One Tree Hill		The O.C.		Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Blind Date	Fifth Wheel
Cinema One		Dito Sa Puso Ko				Batang PX		Isang Tanong, Isang Sagot				Row 4 Ang Baliktorians				Bakit Papa?			
Studio 23	Bewitched	Survivor: Thailand	MYX Backtrax					X-Men Evolution	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Wazzup Wazzup	Fightbox	The Amazing Race 6		Smallville		News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		The Men's Room
AXN		The Amazing Race		Maximum Exposure		Fear Factor		Samurai X	Samurai X	Beastmaster		Ripley's Believe It or Not		Alias		The Amazing Race		Samsung AXN Challenge	
Star World	Becker	The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	Road Trip/ Charmed		The Apprentice/ Wild Card		Manhunt: Search For America's Most Gorgeous Male Model		Friends	Road Trip
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Thrill Seeker		The Sea Hunters		Lost Subs		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials Built For The Kill		Thrill Seeker		The Sea Hunters	
Solar Sports		IBF Japan '04 WS/WD Finals					FIVB Grand Prix Italy vs. China					GWS ep.55	NBA TV Daily	NBA Game Utah @ L.A. Lakers					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Passion For Dessert	It's Good To Be	A Second Look		Look For Less	Style Star	Road & Track	Back To Basics	Clean House	
HBO			Dazd (3:20 PM)			School Ties				Mortal Thoughts (6:50 PM)			Daddy Day Care			Six Feet Under 20: Eye Inside		Jumanji (10:50PM)	
Star Movies			Entrusted (3:40 PM)					Women Vs. Men (5:50 PM)			Solaris (7:20 PM)			Corto Maltese			The Hunted (10:35PM)		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Teen Titans	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Gundam Seed	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Codename: Kids Next Door	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	Boomerang - Boomeraction	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN		Eng. Premier League Highlights '04/'05 Pro Billiards '04 Trick Shot Magic NY USA World Pool Masters '04 Ann Zee Holland		Premier Snooker League '04 Cardiff Wales				Sportscenter Taiwan	Pool/Snooker Mosconi Cup '04		Big 10 Conf Basketball- Indiana vs. Purdue				Sportscenter Asia				
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Untalkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax			Cinema Secrets III Ep 8 When Fantasy Becomes Reality	Tarzan The Magnificent			Mrs. Winterbourne				Deadly Voyage			Tough Luck			Avenging Angelo		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	10.5				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Agency II		Just Cause		10.5			Chanel (10:35PM)		Agency II (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Civilisations				Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Rides		Human Discovery		Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Science Mysteries	
MTV Philippines		VH1 Inside Track Special		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits		MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline	MTV Lokal		Non-Stop Hits	Non-Stop Hits	TRL		Punk'D	Wildboyz	VH1 Hits' Video Collection	
Sports Plus		WTA Finals Philadelphia				Superbowl Stories			Golf Academy 2002	Monster Jam		Freestyle Motorcross		Slipstream		WTA L.A. Sharapova vs Zvonareva			
EWTN	Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Mysteries Of The Rosary	My Little Angels	Angel Force	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Fr. Groeschel	Catholic Morality & The Catechism	EWTN Gallery	The Journey Home		Does The Church Still Teach That	Lord, Have Mercy	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	We Are One Body	Web Of Faith	

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
TUWING HUWEBES pagkatapos ng American Idol
Ating kabalitaan
Chéri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

Que chases British Open dream



ANGELO Que celebrates his victory in the Vietnam Carlsberg Masters. AP

By Musong R. Castillo

FRESH off his breakthrough victory in the Asian Tour, Angelo Que is not resting on his laurels. The winner of the Vietnam Carlsberg Masters has put his winnings on the table for a stint in the biggest stage in golf.

Que has entered the British Open qualifying slated Aug. 6 and 7 at the Saujana Golf Club in Kuala Lumpur, believing he has the game to at least make the field.

"After winning [in Vietnam], I told myself *na kaya ko pala* (I can do it)," said Que during a break in practice at Southwoods yesterday. "It's been a lifelong dream [to play in the British Open] and I think I can do it."

Five Asian berths

Que said that as many as five slots will be up for grabs for Asians in the qualifying event, set in one of the toughest layouts in Asia.

Only players with world rankings points are allowed to take part in the 36-hole qualifying, and Que's Vietnam victory over a field that included Thai star Thongchai Jaydee and former US Open winner Corey Pavin made him eligible.

Only 2 Filipinos

The 26-year-old member of the RP World Amateur team that placed third in 2002 leaves on Jan. 24 as the Asian Tour starts with the Singapore Masters. Que and Gerald Rosales are the only Filipinos entered in the rich event.

Que plans to play in as many as 20 of the 29 events of the Asian Tour schedule and will spend most of the $32,600 (roughly P1.858 million) he won in Vietnam a couple of months ago in taking this step, hopefully, to the big time.

Playing in just one Asian Tour event costs no less than US$1,500 (about P85,000).

Japan PGA Tour campaigner Frankie Miñoza was the last Filipino to tee off in the British Open, the world's oldest championship that draws the game's biggest names every year.

"This is my chance to make it to the biggest [golf] event in the world," said Que. "If I'm dreaming, at least I'm dreaming big."

Philsoc pushing for exclusion of certain sports

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee seems bent on changing the 2005 Southeast Asian Games calendar of sports and events due to financial constraints.

Officials said they will try to revise the calendar, earlier approved by the 11-nation SEAG Federation council, when the group meets here next month.

Philsoc chair Roberto Pagdanganan and his vice chair, Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Cojuangco, said they are keeping an "open mind" with regard to the composition of sports disciplines and their respective events for the Nov. 27 to Dec. 5 Games.

Aside from cost-cutting, the two will cite the lack of venues as another reason in requesting the SEAG Federation to reconsider its position.

A new federation rule calls for the approval of the SEAG sports and events one year before the Games are held.

"Philsoc keeps an open mind with regard to the overall calendar," said Pagdanganan, who will accompany heads of the national sports associations and athletes today in a SEAG pledging session at Malacañang initiated by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo.

"We shall take a hard look at the recommendations of the [review] committee and act accordingly."

The committee was earlier tasked by Philsoc to determine which sports among the 41 earlier approved deserve to be retained for the Games, based on their capacity to boost the country's drive for overall supremacy.

There were 18 national sports associations interviewed by the committee, which is set to submit its recommendation to the Philsoc tomorrow.

Majority of the NSAs interviewed by the committee expressed concern over the state of venues and the high cost of competition equipment that will be needed.

"The hosting of the SEAG is turning out to be a high-wire act in terms of finances but we will do our best," said Pagdanganan. "Sometimes, however, we have to swallow the bitter pill if we want to get better."

Just the same, he expressed appreciation that the committee managed to identify major problems this early.

"The committee's recommendations are very crucial because with an early determination of the issues that must be resolved, we might find the necessary compromise to accommodate all the member nations," said Pagdanganan.

V LEAGUE

Lyceum, Letran seek vital victories

GAMES TODAY (*Rizal Coliseum*)
3 p.m.—San Sebastian vs Letran
5 p.m.—Lyceum vs La Salle

LETRAN and Lyceum tackle separate foes today, looking to gain the inside track for the fourth slot in the Shakey's V League semifinals at the Rizal Coliseum.

Tied with 4-4 slates, the Lady Knights and the Lady Pirates seem to be both peaking at the right time, although Letran has the easier assignment against San Sebastian at 3 p.m.

Lyceum tangles with La Salle in the 5 p.m. contest, with the Lady Archers shooting for no less than a share of the lead with idle Santo Tomas.

The Lady Pirates were swept in three sets by La Salle in the first round, and a loss today could prove devastating to their chances of making it past this phase.

The rest of the elimination-round schedule does not look appealing for Lyceum, with the defending champion Tigresses playing the Lady Pirates on Thursday before clashing with the PSC Lady Legends on Jan. 25.

As things stand, the first three spots in the semis have been conceded to UST, La Salle and PSC. San Sebastian and Far Eastern have earlier bowed out of contention.

Santo Tomas seem to be wary of a semifinal confrontation with the Legends, a motley crew of former national team members running third with a 5-4 card, thus making the chase for No. 1 interesting.

La Salle will be trying to extend a six-game winning streak.

The only real stumbling block in the Lady Archers' way seems to be the Legends, whom they will meet at the end of the elimination round. *Musong R. Castillo*

Catubay targets OPBF fly crown

NEW PHILIPPINE flyweight champion Federico Catubay, once a journeyman, now finds himself getting lucrative offers here and abroad following important wins since hooking up with Cebu City's ALA Boxing Gym.

Leading off his schedule is a Feb. 6 crack at the vacant Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation title against Australia-based Hussein Hussein, a protege of Hall-of-Famer Jeff Fenech.

Philippine-based Kiwi Bruce McTavish, who will be one of the judges of the fight, said it will be an important showdown for both fighters.

Hussein, whose only loss was inflicted by WBC champ Pongsaklek Wongjongkam, sports a 26-1 (20-KO) slate. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

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MILD MENTHOL
Champion
U.S.A. BLEND
CIGARETTES

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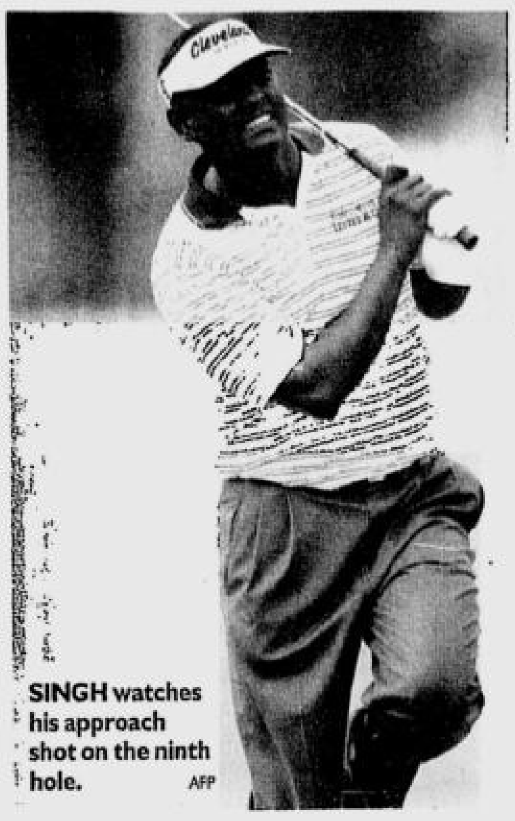


SINGH watches his approach shot on the ninth hole. AFP

SONY TOURNEY

Singh wrests title despite Els' 62

NEW YORK—World number one Vijay Singh fired a closing five-under-par 65 to charge to victory at the $4.8 million Sony Open on Sunday, denying Ernie Els a historic third successive title despite a course record-equaling 62.

The winner of nine trophies and more than $10 million in prize money last year, Singh began the day four shots behind overnight leader Shigeki Maruyama of Japan and went to work quickly at Hawaii's Waialae Country Club with a birdie at the second hole.

The Fijian reeled off three consecutive birdies on nine, 10 and 11 but it was a three-foot putt for birdie on 18 that put him one ahead of Els on 11-under 269, clinching the 25th PGA Tour victory of his career.

Singh's triumph overshadowed a brilliant display from Els, who finished on 270 after his eight-under round.

"I prepared for this pretty well, it's a great way to start the year," said Singh, who has 10 victories in his last 26 starts.

"I just hung in there. I had a lot of birdie chances.

"It takes a lot of pressure off me, everyone saying, 'is he going to win again?' I missed an opportunity last week and this is going to help.

"It's a great relief. I can start breathing again and go and play more comfortably for the rest of the season."

Singh, who led after three rounds of last week's season-opening Mercedes Championships before faltering badly on the final day, carded a bogey-free closing round this time in difficult, blustery conditions.

When the day began, Els was eight strokes off the lead and appeared to have little hope of making it a hat-trick of Sony Open titles.

But the big South African, who won here after playoffs in 2003 and 2004, gave himself a chance with a birdie, birdie, eagle finish.

"It would have been great to come from eight behind and make a playoff but I don't think that will happen too often, guys coming from so far behind and winning," said Els. "I think you have got to play four solid rounds of golf.

"A guy with that talent isn't going away soon. He (Singh) is at the top of his game, you can't think of him faltering.

"You try to finish the golf tournament the best you can. I really wanted to get the best score I could to get some confidence for next week." Maruyama, who grabbed the third-round lead with the help of a hole-in-one, struggled to a one-over 71 on Sunday to finish in a tie for third place with American Charles Howell III (67) on nine-under 271.

Stewart Cink and Brett Quigley were one stroke further adrift on 272. Tommy Armour III and Andrew Magee shared seventh place on 273.

Reuters

Federer, Agassi head charge of seeded bets

MELBOURNE—Defending champion Roger Federer led an express-speed charge of seeded players through the first round of the Australian Open on Monday, with Andre Agassi also making a confident start after an injury scare.

But former world number one and fifth seed Carlos Moya was a shock casualty on the opening day, falling to little-known fellow Spaniard Guillermo Garcia-Lopez.

Top seed Federer raced past Frenchman Fabrice Santoro, 6-1, 6-1, 6-2, in 94 minutes on Rod Laver Arena center court at Melbourne Park.

Four-time champion Agassi, the eighth seed, worked just a little harder as he accounted for German qualifier Dieter Kindlmann, 6-4, 6-3, 6-0, in a display which helped ease concern about his hip injury.

Former women's champion Serena Williams and US Open winner Svetlana Kuznetsova matched Federer's no-nonsense approach.

Williams dismissed France's Camille Pin, 6-1, 6-1, in 57 minutes in the opening match of the tournament on Rod Laver Arena.

Fifth seed Kuznetsova spent even less time on court, storming past American qualifier Jessica Kirkland, 6-1, 6-1, in 43 minutes.

While most seeds prospered, it was a fruitless day at the centenary Open for Moya, runner-up here in 1997.

The 1998 French Open champion was beaten, 7-5, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, by Garcia-Lopez, a qualifier who is playing only his third Grand Slam tournament.

Agassi shrugged off concern about the hip injury which forced him out of a warm-up event last week as he handed Kindlmann a tennis lesson.

Japan's Ai Sugiyama was the first seeded casualty when the number 16 was upset, 7-5, 6-4, by Slovakian Martina Sucha on showcourt three.

Sugiyama was soon joined on the sidelines by 1995 champion and 24th seed Mary Pierce, who was beaten, 6-2, 6-2, by fellow Frenchwoman Stephanie Cohen-Aloro.

World number five Kuznetsova peppered her match with 17 unforced errors but was more concerned later to reject unproven allegations she was a drug cheat after Belgian authorities had inadvertently pointed the finger at her and two others.

Eerdekens said Belgian Justine Henin-Hardenne had been cleared, putting the spotlight on the other three: Kuznetsova, fellow Russian Elena Dementieva and Frenchwoman Nathalie Dechy.

All three have pleaded their innocence.

Reuters

FEDERER serves during his first round match against Kindlmann. REUTERS

SPORTSWATCH

RTU bags overall championship

HOST Rizal Technological University nipped Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) for the overall crown in the recent 17th Stage Colleges and University Athletic Association-National Capital Region tournament. The RTU Technocrats garnered 496 points, 60 points ahead of defending champion PUP. The Boni-based squad led from start to finish, dominating athletics, swimming, football, volleyball, women's basketball, softball men, and table tennis women. The Sta. Mesa-based PUP Marooners emerged first runner-up with 436 points. PUP ruled lawn tennis, badminton, baseball, basketball men, softball women and futsal. Second runner-up Philippine Normal University stood out in arnis men, taekwondo women and cheer dance competition to finish with 270 points. The third runner-up is the Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (Earist) with a score of 182.

World Slasher begins tonight

THE "WORLD Slasher Cup 8-Cock Derby," known internationally as the Olympics of cockfighting, blasts off today at the 17,000-seater Araneta Coliseum, with more than 100 participants seeing action. Derby starts at 2 p.m. Big Dome owner Jorge "Nene" Araneta, one of the hosts, said majority of the participants compete not for money rewards but for prestige and honor of being the best in the world. To parade their prized battlecorsses today are 2001 Slasher Cup champion Roger Roberts of Georgia, famous Sweater man Bruce Barnette in partnership with Sonny Lagon, current Sunset Game Club Cocker of the Year, Joseph Wolcott, Johnny Moore and Larry Whitehead of Tennessee, Kelly Green, Jimmy Cody, Riochi Saito of Japan, Rene Medina, Rice de Guzman and Emitt San Juan from California and first timer Thomas Mischkus of Germany. The heavyweights of Philippine cockfighting are also battle-ready

Cruz sizzles with 4 gold medals

LIPA CITY—Judith Cruz won four gold medals in the recent 1st San Sebastian swimming competition to lead Manila Seahawks Swimming Team to the general championship at the Lipa Swimming Pool Complex. Competing in the 9-10 age category. Cruz emerged the most bemedalled swimmer by topping the 50-m back with a time of 31.22, 50-m free in 32.25, 100-m free in 1:11: 75 and the 50-m fly in 35.16. The MSST garnered a total of 521 points followed by Oriental Mindoro with 280, host Lipa City Mediatrix 256.50 and Naga Swimming Association with 243.50. Mediatrix Swimming Club president Manolito Libat said the meet will be done on a quarterly basis with the approval of club officials Rodel Macasaet, vice president; Ma. Carmen Garcia, secretary; Bebee Guillermo, treasurer; Nina Toledo, ways and means officer; Jojo Masca, public relations officer; and engineer Nerio L. Ronquillo and lawyer Noli Tibayan, board members. Pancho Lardizabal is tournament co-chair.

CKSC, Sakya win opening games

THE 2ND Baden Powell Cup Inter-School Scout Basketball Tournament opened Sunday with convincing wins posted by Chiang Kai Shek College (CKSC) and Philippine Sakya Academy. CKSC relied on balanced production from its players to beat Grace Christian High School, 68-25. Francis Peter Tan led the team with 11 points, with Michael Young adding 10. Equally impressive was Sakya which toyed around with Philippine Jin Nan Institute, 89-57. Ranielito Macadangdang scored 44 points for the winning team with Derick Chong and Marc Manago contributing 12 and 10, respectively. St. Stephen's and Philadelphia High Schools were playing at presstime. Defending champion Hope Christian High School took a bye. The event, participated in by senior scouts from the different Filipino-Chinese schools, is sponsored by the Filipino Chinese Scout Club, the Rotary Club of Bagumbayan, and Gilbert Kua Yan Yee. Games resume Jan. 22.

Talavera, Aquino executive champs

ROMEO Talavera, OIC of PNB-Mandaluyong, and Jose Aquino Jr., coach of Central Luzon State University, ruled the second edition of MCC Executive Category 1 & 2 active chess held Saturday at the 4F of J&F Divino Bldg. at 967 Aurora Blvd., Quezon City. Talavera trounced Romeo Mateo of PNP in 45 moves of a Queen's pawn in the fifth and final round to improve his total output to 4.5 points and claimed the Category 1 title. Aquino actually tied for first to third places with Ateneo De Manila University coach NM Roland Joseph Perez and 2004 national finalist Fami Fazon with 4.0 points apiece. Aquino, despite losing his fifth and final match against Fazon after 40 moves of a Ruy Lopez, topped Category 2 with a better tiebreak. Perez took second place while Fazon ended in third spot. Meanwhile, the third edition will kick off on Feb. 19.

RACING TIPS

AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. He's A Balong 2. Boogie Shoes 3. I Don't Dance 4. Deity

Race 2—1. My Lucky One/Men of Honor 2. Cool Reception 3. Parrot Moe 4. Kantayok

Race 3—1. Victoria's Secret 2. Golden Lance 3. My Rabbonnie 4. Soy Numero Uno 5. Schwarzenegger

Race 4—1. Golden Africa 2. Sham Sham 3. Diva 4. Caballero

Race 5—1. Gleaming Heart 2. Ravishing Rafty 3. Angel Eyes 4. Jaw Breaker 5. Habagat

Race 6—1. King Size 2. Count Your Blessings 3. Wynona Raider 4. Nagmamahal

Race 7—1. Sir Guguy 2. Sweet Talk 3. Queen Banana 4. Security Star 5. Aim and Fire

Race 8—1. Pirouette 2. Words of Joy 3. King View 4. Decidido 5. Skip Away 6. Centra

SuperSonics silence Cavaliers

SEATTLE—Ray Allen scored 27 points and Vladimir Radmanovic chipped in with 23 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Seattle SuperSonics to a 105-97 win over the Cleveland Cavaliers Sunday.

Antonio Daniels contributed 15 points, eight assists and six rebounds to the cause as the host SuperSonics registered their fourth victory in five games.

Seattle was without its second leading scorer Rashard Lewis, who missed his second consecutive game with knee problems.

LeBron James produced another sparkling effort for Cleveland, notching a game-high 35 points, 11 assists and five rebounds.

Drew Gooden added 27 points as the Cavaliers lost for only the second time this year.

Cleveland pulled to within 94-91 but Allen hit a jumper and Luke Ridnour went six-for-six from the free throw line to seal the win in the last 30 seconds.

In Toronto, Morris Peterson recorded 25 points and 10 rebounds for his first double-double of the season and Chris Bosh had 24 points and 10 rebounds as the Raptors beat the New Orleans Hornets, 102-99, to post their third straight win at the Air Canada Center.

Trailing by 16 points in the third quarter, the Raptors mounted a late charge and Rafer Alston nailed two free throws with five seconds remaining.

Jalen Rose came off the bench to score 19 points, including 11 in the fourth quarter, as the Raptors seized their ninth victory in 10 home games.

Hornets Lee Nailon scored 32 points. *Reuters*

Eagles advance to 4th NFC title date

PHILADELPHIA—Thanks to the best clutch performance of Freddie Mitchell's four-year career, the Philadelphia Eagles advanced to their fourth straight NFC championship game, routing the Minnesota Vikings, 27-14, Sunday.

Donovan McNabb and the Eagles (14-3) got plenty of help from the self-destructing Vikings (9-9), who showed exactly how they lost seven of their last 10 regular-season games to back into the playoffs. Minnesota's high-powered offense couldn't handle defensive end Jevon Kearse and linebacker Jeremiah Trotter—neither of whom was with the Eagles last season.

Philadelphia, which has lost three consecutive conference title games, the last two at home, hosts Atlanta next Sunday. The angst level this week in Philly will be off the scale as the Eagles attempt to get to their first Super Bowl in 24 years.

The inept Vikings didn't exactly provide a test, but Michael Vick and the Falcons should be a more formidable hurdle.

AP

UC Stickfighters top Sinulog arnis

CEBU CITY—University of Cebu, with playing coach Maximo Caballes leading by example, captured four gold, three silver and one bronze medals yesterday to bag the overall crown in the Sinulog International Arnis Championships at the Elizabeth Mall here.

Caballes ruled the premier open senior heavyweight division and joined UC Stickfighters John Kenne, Zandro Cortez and Michael Bernard Miñoza in the winners' circle of the event organized by the World Eskrima Kali Arnis Federation and the Cebu City Sports Commission. *Eskrimadors* from South Korea, Switzerland and the US took part.

REUTERS

SOCCER GREAT. Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona waves an Olympiakos' jumper bearing his name during the match between Olympiakos and Iraklis in Athens. AP

200-plus teams join Bill Shaw golf

MORE than 200 teams are expected to compete for top honors in the 16th Bill Shaw Memorial Golf Classic slated Jan. 28 and 29 at both the East and West courses of Wack Wack Golf and Country Club and backed mainly by Samsung Electronics Phils. and Northwest Airlines.

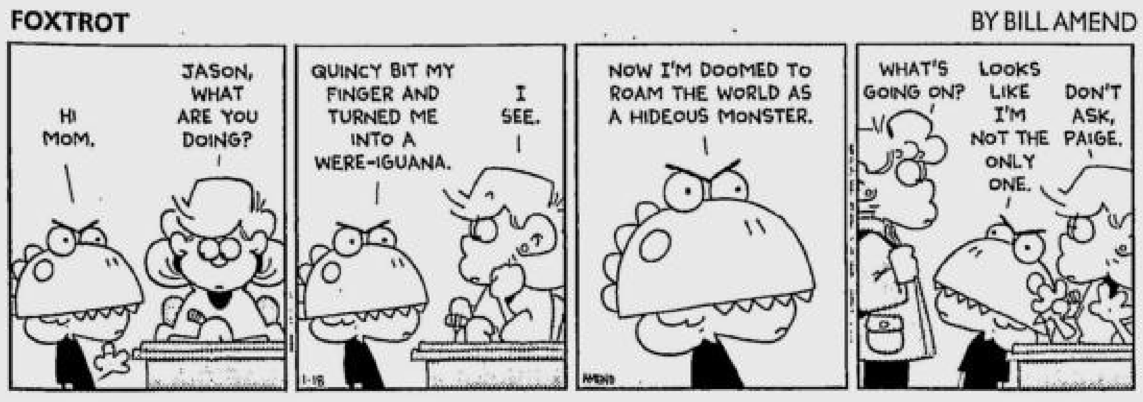
The teams will also be shooting for hole-in-one prizes, including two round-trip business-class tickets to New York, three cars—a Camry 2005 each from Toyota Balintawak and Toyota Motors Phils. and one Lancer GLX M/T from Mitsubishi Motors Phils.—a golf cart from Kart Plaza, a motorbike from Kymco World Inc. and an electric massage chair from Asian Therapeutics Inc.

Sports and Games committee chair Pablo Soon said the roundtrip tickets to New York, if not won, will be raffled off during the awards night. Soon's committee organized the tournament.

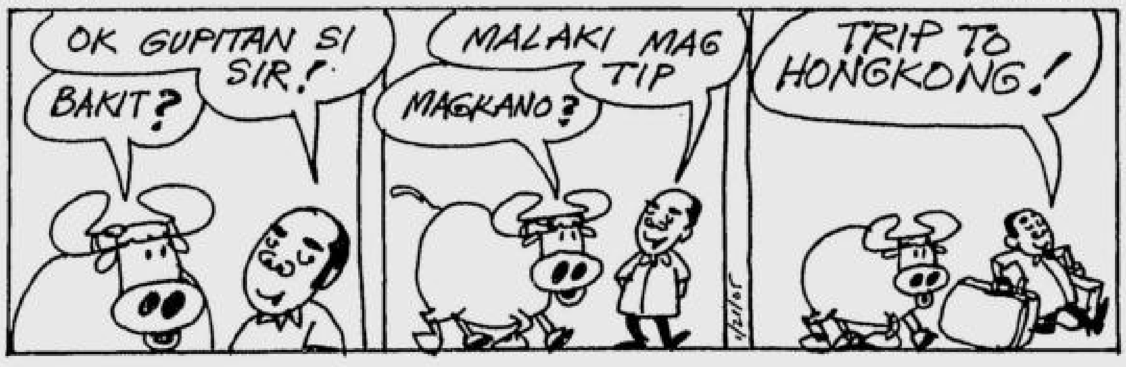
Major sponsors are Unilever Phils., First Gentleman Foundation, Philippine Airlines, Pacsports and Globe Telecom. PAL will raffle off two round-trip business-class tickets to Singapore during the awards night.

Longtime Wack Wack regular Gilberto "Bibit" Duavit heads the list of premier sponsors that include GG&A Clubshares, Immuvit, Cathay Land, McDonald's Phils., Waterfront Hotel & Casino, Avesco Marketing Corp., MC Home Depot, E.G. Ramos Mfg. Corp., Liwayway Marketing Corp., Kubota Agro-Industrial Machinery Phils. Inc., Equitable PCI Bank, Prime Alcohol, Tanduay Distillers Inc., Cost U Less Shopping Warehouse, Arrow Shirt, Fortune Tobacco, Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel, Godiva Inc., Discovery Suites, Zest-O Corp., Mister Donut, Shangri-La Plaza and Johnnie Walker.

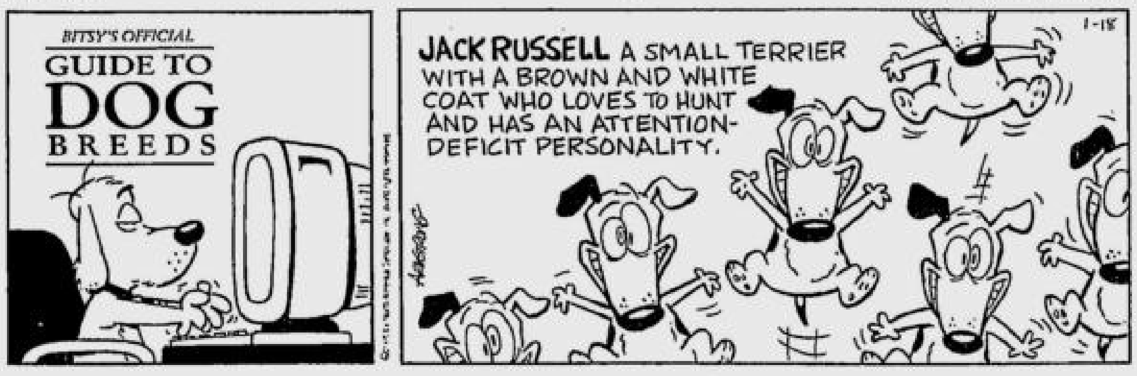
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


HI MOM.
JASON, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
QUINCY BIT MY FINGER AND TURNED ME INTO A WERE-IGUANA.
I SEE.
NOW I'M DOOMED TO ROAM THE WORLD AS A HIDEOUS MONSTER.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
LOOKS LIKE I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE.
DON'T ASK, PAIGE.
1-18
AMEND

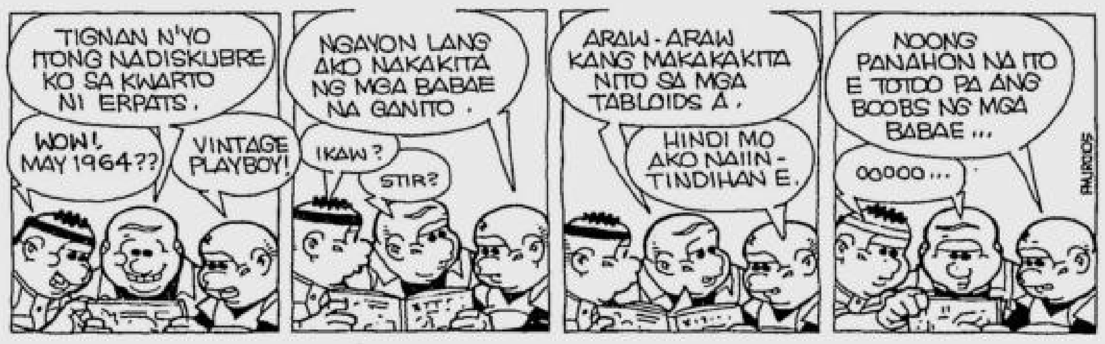
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


OK GUPITAN SI SIR!
BAKIT?
MALAKI MAG TIP
MAGKANO?
TRIP TO HONGKONG!

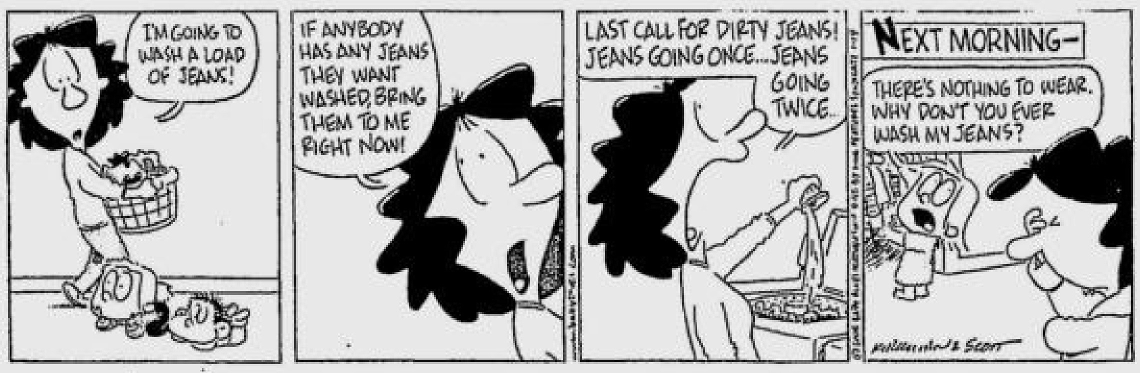
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


BITSY'S OFFICIAL GUIDE TO DOG BREEDS
JACK RUSSELL A SMALL TERRIER WITH A BROWN AND WHITE COAT WHO LOVES TO HUNT AND HAS AN ATTENTION-DEFICIT PERSONALITY.
1-18

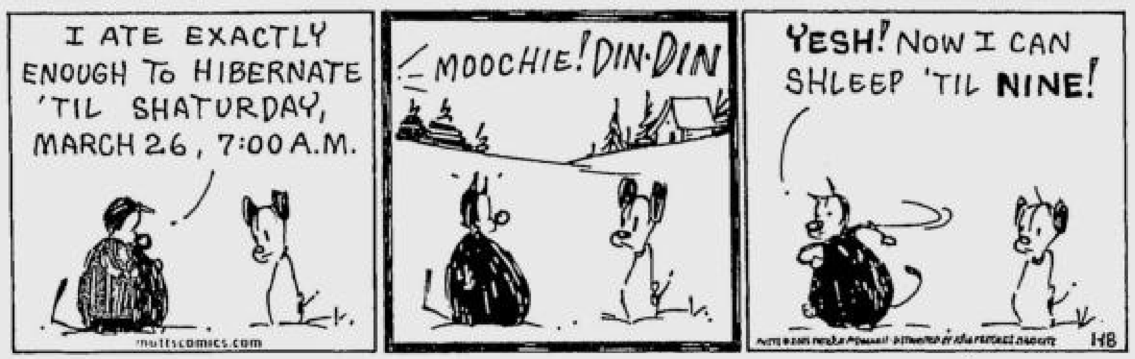
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


TIGNAN N'YO ITONG NADISKUBRE KO SA KWARTO NI ERPATS.
WOW! MAY 1964??
VINTAGE PLAYBOY!
NGAYON LANG AKO NAKAKITA NG MGA BABAE NA GANITO.
IKAW?
STIR?
ARAW-ARAW KANG MAKAKAKITA NITO SA MGA TABLOIDS A.
HINDI MO AKO NAIINTINDIHAN E.
NOONG PANAHON NA ITO E TOTOO PA ANG BOOBS NG MGA BABAE...
OOOOO...
PAURIOS

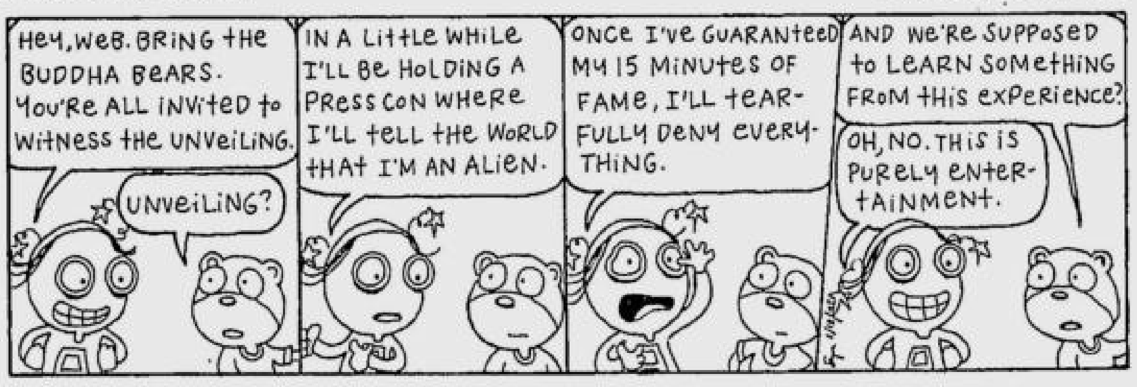
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


I'M GOING TO WASH A LOAD OF JEANS!
IF ANYBODY HAS ANY JEANS THEY WANT WASHED, BRING THEM TO ME RIGHT NOW!
LAST CALL FOR DIRTY JEANS! JEANS GOING ONCE... JEANS GOING TWICE...
NEXT MORNING—
THERE'S NOTHING TO WEAR. WHY DON'T YOU EVER WASH MY JEANS?

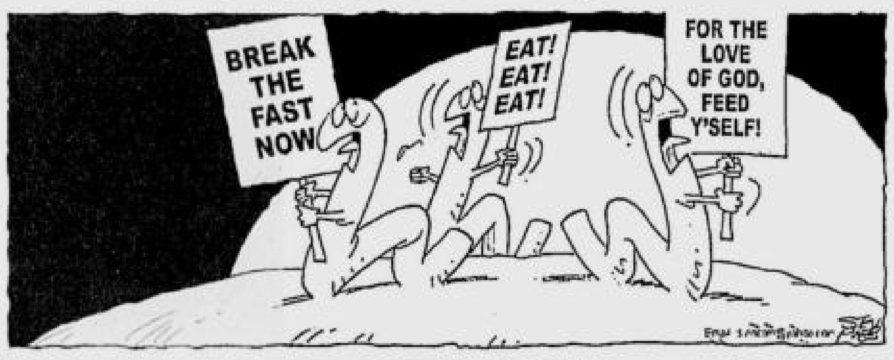
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


I ATE EXACTLY ENOUGH TO HIBERNATE 'TIL SHATURDAY, MARCH 26, 7:00 A.M.
MOOCHIE! DIN·DIN
YESH! NOW I CAN SHLEEP 'TIL NINE!
muttscomics.com
1-18

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

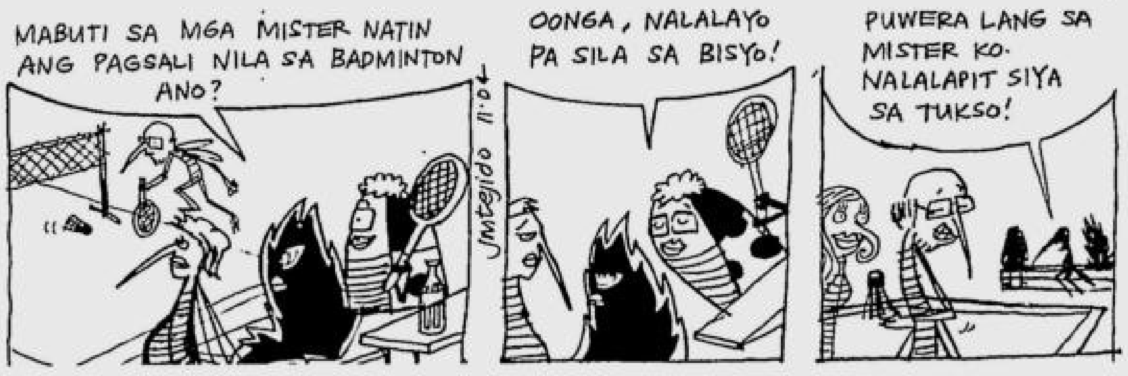

HEY, WEB. BRING THE BUDDHA BEARS. YOU'RE ALL INVITED TO WITNESS THE UNVEILING.
UNVEILING?
IN A LITTLE WHILE I'LL BE HOLDING A PRESS CON WHERE I'LL TELL THE WORLD THAT I'M AN ALIEN.
ONCE I'VE GUARANTEED MY 15 MINUTES OF FAME, I'LL TEARFULLY DENY EVERYTHING.
AND WE'RE SUPPOSED TO LEARN SOMETHING FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?
OH, NO. THIS IS PURELY ENTERTAINMENT.

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

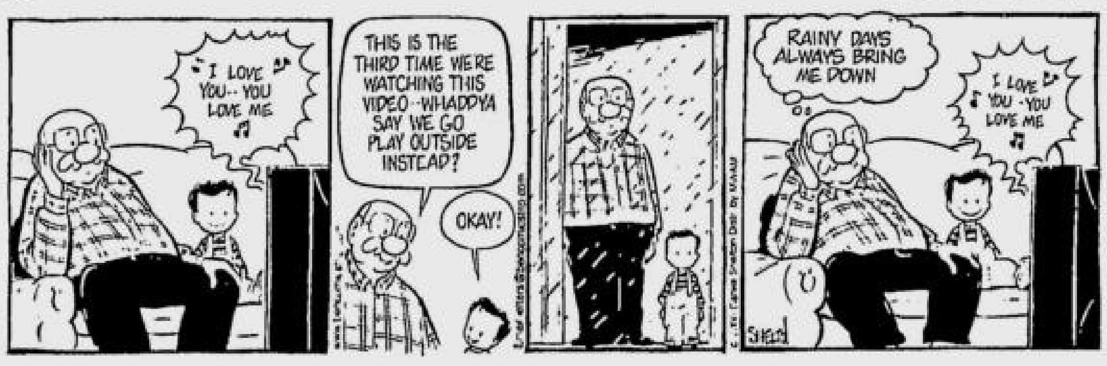

BREAK THE FAST NOW
EAT! EAT! EAT!
FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, FEED Y'SELF!

ITO ANG NANGYARI SA LOOB NG TIYAN NI MOSES NOONG SYA AY NAG-FASTING NG APATNAPUNG ARAW SA BUNDOK SINAI

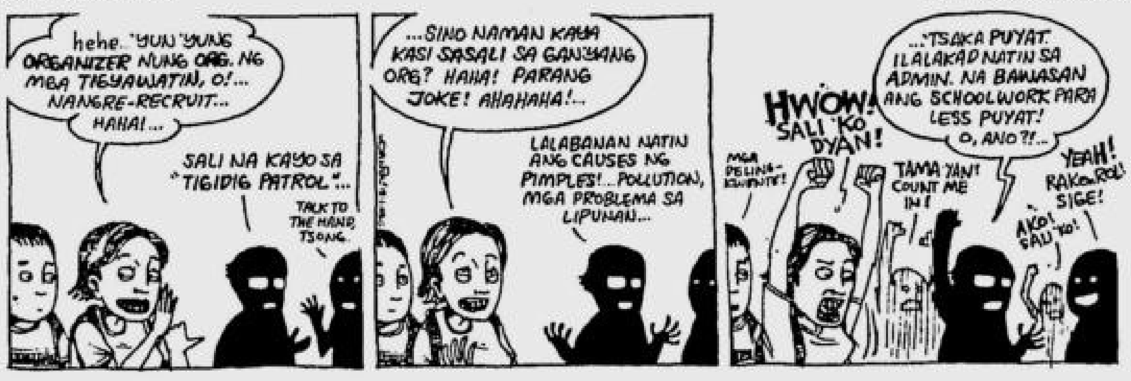
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MABUTI SA MGA MISTER NATIN ANG PAGSALI NILA SA BADMINTON ANO?
OONGA, NALALAYO PA SILA SA BISYO!
PUWERA LANG SA MISTER KO. NALALAPIT SIYA SA TUKSO!
Jmtejido 11.04

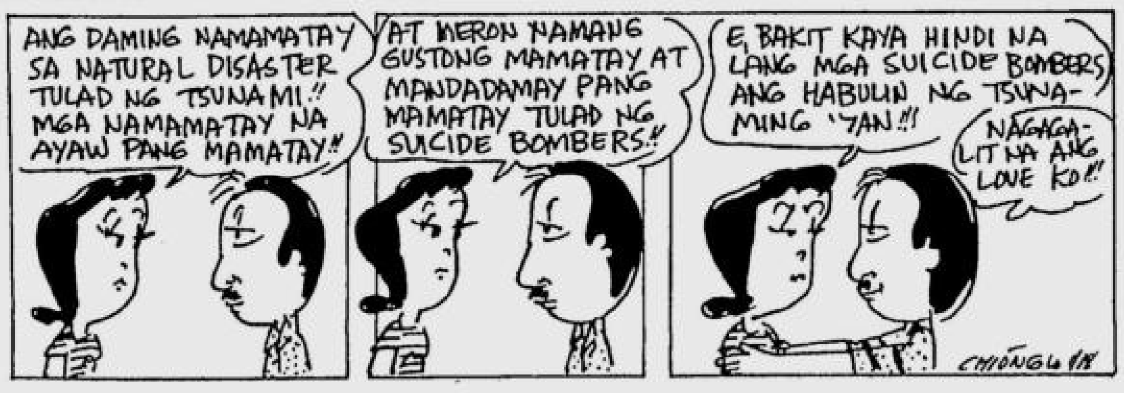
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


I LOVE YOU-- YOU LOVE ME
THIS IS THE THIRD TIME WE'RE WATCHING THIS VIDEO--WHADDYA SAY WE GO PLAY OUTSIDE INSTEAD?
OKAY!
RAINY DAYS ALWAYS BRING ME DOWN
I LOVE YOU-YOU LOVE ME
SHELTON

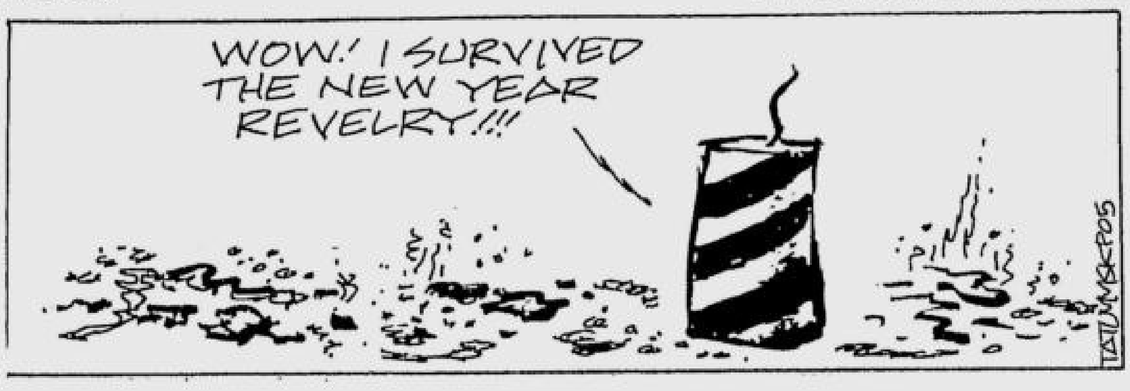
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


hehe. 'YUN 'YUNG ORGANIZER NUNG ORG. NG MGA TIGYAWATIN, O!... NANGRE-RECRUIT... HAHA!...
SALI NA KAYO SA "TIGIDIG PATROL"...
TALK TO THE HAND, TSONG.
...SINO NAMAN KAYA KASI SASALI SA GANYANG ORG? HAHA! PARANG JOKE! AHAHAHA!...
LALABANAN NATIN ANG CAUSES NG PIMPLES!... POLLUTION, MGA PROBLEMA SA LIPUNAN...
HWOW! SALI KO DYAN!
MGA PELING-KWINTE!
...TSAKA PUYAT. ILALAKAD NATIN SA ADMIN. NA BAWASAN ANG SCHOOLWORK PARA LESS PUYAT! O, ANO?!...
TAMA YAN! COUNT ME IN!
YEAH! RAKENROL! SIGE!
AKO! SALI KO!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ANG DAMING NAMAMATAY SA NATURAL DISASTER TULAD NG TSUNAMI!! MGA NAMAMATAY NA AYAW PANG MAMATAY!!
AT MERON NAMANG GUSTONG MAMATAY AT MANDADAMAY PANG MAMATAY TULAD NG SUICIDE BOMBERS!!
E, BAKIT KAYA HINDI NA LANG MGA SUICIDE BOMBERS ANG HABULIN NG TSUNAMING 'YAN!!!
NAGAGALIT NA ANG LOVE KO!!
CHIONGLO 1/18

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


WOW! I SURVIVED THE NEW YEAR REVELRY!!!
TATUMSKP05

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a lighthearted, whimsical side to you. Basically, you are playful. No matter how serious you are privately, others see you as fun and lively. Your wonderful imagination sets you apart as an individual. You know how to awaken the child in others. The year ahead could be one of the best years of your life. Expect a miracle!
Birthdate of: Mark Messier, hockey player; Kevin Costner, actor/director; Danny Kaye, comic actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a good day to count your money and get an idea of what you have and what you have not. It's sobering at times, but it's important to know.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Today the Moon is in your sign, making you a bit more emotional. However, the up side is that it draws favorable opportunities to you.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You need quiet and peaceful times at some point today. Try to seek out a little solitude for yourself. You're dealing with a lot, and you need to relax.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is a good day to talk to friends, especially a female friend. Don't be afraid to confide your inner feelings. We all have to talk to someone now and then.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Give extra thought to your appearance today. I say this because you will likely call attention to yourself whether you plan to or not. It's just what will happen.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Try to do something different and out of the ordinary today. Deep down, you want to learn something new or discover some adventure! Go somewhere you haven't been before.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You like to get along with others. You don't like to rock the boat. Today you have a chance to see how others think and see how their values are different from yours.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Because the Moon is in a sign that is directly opposite from yours, you might feel that others challenge you today. In particular, they want to know what you feel about things.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Set aside some time today to work at getting better organized at home and at your job. Whatever you do to make your life run more smoothly is well worth the effort.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Playful activities with children are delightful today. Any kind of creative activity will please you now. Find enjoyment in doing arts and crafts.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Childhood memories might stir unexpected feelings today. But you can learn something by seeing your childhood through your adult eyes.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Discussions with neighbors, relatives and siblings are meaningful today. (Remember that you can't hear what someone else is saying when you're talking.)

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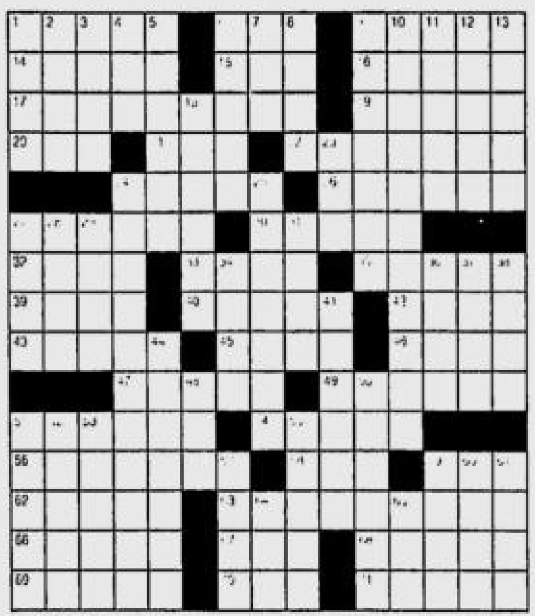
DAILY CROSSWORD



By Allan E. Parrish
Mentor, OH

1/18/05

ACROSS
1 Attempt to disprove
6 __ Schwarz (toy store)
9 News medium
14 Olds model
15 LBJ follower
16 Surgeon's cutter
17 Sunday text
19 Retract one's words
20 Shatner novel "__ War"
21 Annoy
22 Mulls over
24 Port on the Ob
26 Self-centered individual
27 Slight breeze
30 Actor Zimbalist
32 Indy-winner Luyendyk
33 Four-letter swear word?
35 Capital of Bangladesh
39 Physician's pellet
40 Hollow tubes
42 Type of exam
43 Scottish dagger
45 Presidential bill-killer
46 USC rival
47 U-boat detector
49 Whip strokes
51 Not consistent
54 Move along laterally
56 Elements of a strategy
58 Caribbean or Coral
59 Little white lie
62 Home web site?
63 Lincoln's eighty
66 Unifying idea
67 La __, Bolivia
68 Destiny
69 Sen. Kefauver
70 Actress Joanne
71 Clio aspirant

DOWN
1 Fully absorbed
2 Other
3 Flyer's bill?
4 WWW address
5 Hoyden
6 Pond denizens
7 Latin lesson word
8 Working in a mess?
9 Went down
10 Big name in dictionaries
11 Japanese immigrant
12 Approaches
13 Lovers' rendezvous
18 False charge
23 "__ the land..."
24 1965 Rolling Stones hit
25 Word to add on to 17A, 63A, 10D and 24D
27 Nukes
28 Composer Satie
29 Carpet feature
31 Banjo feature
34 Bounty rival
36 St. Louis landmark
37 Cabbage-like vegetable
38 "Woe is me"
41 Fusing material
44 Observes
48 MoMA location
50 Seward's folly
51 Mississippi or Ohio
52 Trodden tracks
53 Group of eight
55 Honda rival
57 Some CA cops
59 Fill-in sheet
60 "My Friend __"
61 Three-__ salad
64 Paddle's cousin
65 Philanderer

Monday's Puzzle Solved

W	O	A	D		R	A	G	E		S	I	D	L	E
A	C	N	E		E	L	A	N		C	D	R	O	M
W	H	I	T	E	F	A	N	G		R	E	A	L	M
A	R	M	E	D			G	I	V	E	A	W	A	Y
S	E	A	N	C	E	S		N	E	E				
			T	H	E	G	R	E	E	N	M	I	L	E
A	H	A			E	T	A		R	E	A	S	O	N
L	U	N	G	S		S	I	D		D	R	A	C	O
U	B	O	A	T	S		S	R	I			O	I	L
M	Y	B	L	U	E	H	E	A	V	E	N			
				D	E	E		B	Y	W	O	R	D	S
V	I	S	C	E	R	A	L			E	N	E	R	O
O	C	E	A	N		R	E	D	D	R	A	G	O	N
L	E	A	S	T		S	I	N	E		G	A	L	E
E	S	S	E	S		T	S	A	R		E	L	L	S

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1/18/05

Update on Nora Aunor

VIEWFINDER
Nestor U. Torre

WE'VE been missing Nora Aunor for months now, so we were glad to get an update on her activities recently from Butch Francisco on Channel 7's "Startalk."

Butch talked to Nora via long distance phone to the States, where the Superstar has been on a performance tour for a number of months.

Does she have any plans of coming home? Sure, said Nora cheerfully, but only after she's wrapped up her remaining performances, which have been lined up until March.

Nora moved us when she shared with Butch that she was happy living a simple life in the States, away from the sometimes ungrateful local show biz scene.

We got the feeling that she felt more appreciated there than here—a sad indictment of our cavalier disdain for our veteran luminaries when they're past their prime.

For our part, we disagree with people who sniff that Nora is yesterday's news. We feel that she still has some great performances left in her, and we will support efforts to revive her stellar career here, after she winds up her performance tour of the States.

Humilde 'Meek' Roxas

WE were sad to hear that screenwriter **Humilde "Meek" Roxas** passed away recently. He may not have been a familiar name to many people, but we regarded him as a good screenwriter. In fact, we once tapped him as a guest lecturer in a writing workshop we conducted.

Meek wrote mainly action-drama screenplays, which were better than some because he payed attention to logic in plotting and integral character development.

He was in great demand as a scriptwriter. In fact, when we listed down all of the film credits for a single year of Filipino movie production, Meek left the competition far behind and chalked up 24 scripts, either written solo or with a co-writer!

We will miss Meek Roxas.

'The Hulk'

AT 8 P.M. on Jan. 23, HBO screens "The Hulk," starring **Eric Bana** as Bruce Banner. The brilliant researcher is working with cutting-edge genetic technology, and one of his experiments goes awry.

As a result, Banner begins to feel some kind of presence within, a stranger who feels familiar, slightly dangerous, and yet darkly attractive.

All the while, a massive creature cuts a swath of destruction, and the military is sent after him. Banner's friends try to stop the onslaught, but it may be too late to save both man and "monster."

Ang Lee directs, and other stars include **Jennifer Connely** and **Nick Nolte**.

'Dying to Be Apart'

IN "DYING to Be Apart" (Jan. 23 at 7 p.m.), the Discovery Channel tells the tragic story of Iranian conjoined twin sisters **Ladan** and **Laleh Bijani**, who had wanted to be separated since they were youngsters.

Having studied law for four years at Tehran University, they went to Germany in 1996, trying to get doctors there to separate them, but the German doctors refused. In 2003,

UPDATE/ A23

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 (DTS) RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 (DTS) SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY
3 (DTS) OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) KUN FU HUSTLE
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 (DTS) OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 BLADE TRINITY

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE
4 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 (DOLBY) PANAGHOY SA SUBA
4 (DTS) SIGAW

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 (DTS ES) OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 HAPPY TOGETHER
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 (DOLBY) KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 (DTS) OCEAN'S TWELVE

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 AISHITE IMASU 1941
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) ALEXANDER
4 (DTS) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 SKY CAPTAIN
2 SHARK TALE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 7953320
1 KUN FU HUSTLE
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE

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• REGIONAL CINEMAS •

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870
1 CELLULAR
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
4 SAPLOT
5 OCEAN'S TWELVE

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332
1 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
2 OCEAN'S TWELVE
3 SALAT SA LIGAYA
4 BAD SANTA
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE

ANGELES (045) 892-2548
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 SEED OF CHUCKY
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 THE GHOST

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 SALAT SA LIGAYA
3 SEED OF CHUCKY
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 BLADE TRINITY
6 KUNG FU HUSTLE

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
5 THE GHOST
6 SUPERBABIES: BABY GENIUSES 2

ILOILO (033) 336-8070
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 HELLWOLF
3 BIRTH
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE
5 THE SIN
6 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER

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ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU
THX 1 OCEAN'S 12	1 KUNG FU HUSTLE	1 KUNG FU HUSTLE	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 KUNG FU HUSTLE 12:45, 2 50, 4 55, 7 00, 9 05, 11 10	1 OCEAN'S 12
2 RAISE YOUR VOICE	2 OCEAN'S 12	2 RAISE YOUR VOICE	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 OCEAN'S 12 1 20, 3 50, 6 20, 8 20, 11 20	2 BLADE: TRINITY
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE	3 BLADE: TRINITY	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 OCEAN'S 12 [illegible] 5 30, 8 00, 10 30	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN 1 05, 3 10, 5 15, 7 20, 9 25, 11 30	3 ONE MISSED CALL
4 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN	4 RAISE YOUR VOICE	4 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN	GUARANTEED SEATS 4 RAISE YOUR VOICE 2 00, 4 20, 6 40, 9 00, 11 20	4 2046
5 BLADE: TRINITY		5 ENTENG KABISOTE	GUARANTEED SEATS 5 BLADE: TRINITY 2 50, 5 00, 7 10, 9 20, 11 30	5
		6 BLADE: TRINITY		
		7 HAPPY TOGETHER		

GB1 GREENBELT 1
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:20, 1 25, 3:30, 5 35, 7.40, 9:45
2 OCEAN'S 12 1 50, 4 20, 6 50, 9 20

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
WELCOME 2005 SALE January 14 to 31, 2005	WELCOME 2005 SALE January 14 to 31, 2005	3 ANGELS BROADCASTING NETWORK 3 KINGS CONCERT: CELEBRATING THE GIFT-GIVER January 22, 2005

ENTERTAINMENT LIVE!

GREENBELT 2	GREENBELT 3
WELCOME 2005 SALE January 14 to 31, 2005	WELCOME 2005 SALE January 14 to 31, 2005

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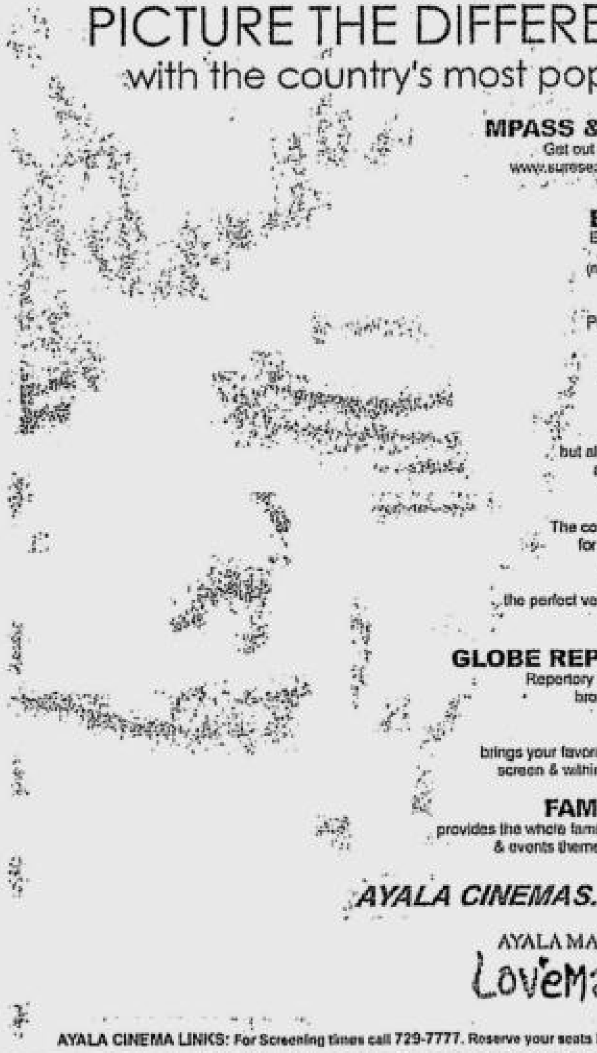

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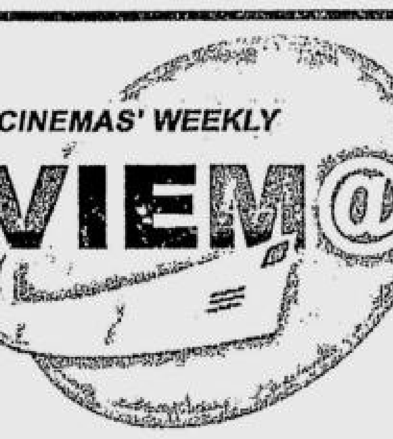

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AYALA CENTER ALABANG TOWN AYALA CENTER CEBU LoveMall!

Maria Ressa does 'the right thing'

From page A24

felt like now I could actually do something about the things I believed in, which I pushed aside to put CNN's interest first.

"With CNN, I spent my career bridging cultures more than I did really helping create culture," she pointed out. "With CNN I looked at myself as the person who was jumping up and down, saying 'look at these stories, they are important! You should be concentrating on these stories!'

"We've got half of the world's population in Asia, but if you think about it from an American perspective, Asia gets very little coverage. That's been the bulk of my career—advocating an Asian story for a Western market."

4 long years

Ressa said she also chose ABS-CBN over CNN because of a "professional reason."

"I think ABS-CBN was a bigger challenge for me. It is extremely influential in Filipino life. It's the market that I want to be in and want to help develop. I guess the exciting part is the feel I've learned so much from CNN, that I can actually contribute to this [organization] and craft it in a way that's better than what CNN is doing."

Ressa said the decision to leave CNN did not happen overnight. She thought about it for four long years.

"Gabby and I had been talking since four years ago," she said of the ABS-CBN chair.

"IF YOU hold on to a cycle too long, you're going to miss the next one."

"I was living in Jakarta at that time, so I didn't think it was possible. Plus, my contract with CNN was exclusive. That meant ABS-CBN would have had to hire CNN and then I would be an employee of CNN working for ABS.

"We came close to an agreement somewhere down the road, but the timing wasn't right," she said. "Timing is everything for anything. If you're at the right place at the right time as a reporter, you got it."

She said it was while she was covering the Indonesian elections early last year that Lopez called and said he was "really serious about this. I want to start talking with you."

Love the region

Ressa said that although her CNN bosses had asked her not to leave, they eventually allowed her to get out of her contract, which goes up to until next year.

"The passion that I had at the beginning is now tinged with experience," Ressa saud. "But if I don't listen to my inner voice that is telling me to look at my life, I'd turn bitter.

"You have to balance it," she said. "I'm only as good at my job for them, and I'm happy doing it. That's why I was effective at what I did. I love the region. For one I wasn't an American here looking to move back to America. This was my region. I had my own personal mission, aside from CNN's mission, that kept me there. Now that mission is changing slightly."

Ressa came to her new office at ABS-CBN at 6:30 a.m. just to "get a feel of my new work area," she said.

"After my first day here [ABS-CBN], I was inundated. It was like a second tsunami. It's a huge organization, with 3,000 employees. It's got multiple platforms. All of a sudden I started thinking. 'My god, how can we streamline? Are we doing this the right way? Is the flow of information going through everyone who should be handling it? Are they handling the stories the best way?'

"My god! I've not put in as many hours as I've put in in the last week and a half. It's very different. The difference is when I put in this many hours at CNN, it was for a breaking news story and it was instant gratification. There was a story at the end of it. This is sustained. It's going to actually test my maturity."

Update on Nora Aunor

From page A22

they were finally operated on in Singapore, but they didn't survive the risky procedure.

In previously unseen family video footage, the twins confide their private thoughts about the separation, while friends, family and the doctor who performed the operation reveal the extraordinary story behind the twins' decision to be apart.

Replays are at 1 p.m. on Jan. 24, 7 p.m. on Jan. 26, 3 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Jan. 27, and 9 a.m. on Jan. 30.

Feedback

FROM CHARLES Romano of Makati City: "Even if not many people saw **Cesar Montano's** 'Panaghoy sa Suba' during the Metro Manila Film Festival, I think the movie has good chances of making it abroad, not just in international film festivals, but also in limited commercial release.

"It's a visually arresting film, and it presents a Philippines that is hard to find these days—beautiful, virtuous, true to itself.

"The production's unique look and character will be appreciated by viewers looking for what is essential and true. That's a rare quality these days, but Montano has captured it richly in his quietly beautiful film."

Elvis mini-series

ELVIS Presley's 70th birth anniversary this year has prompted the production of new shows about him. For instance, CBS is producing a four-hour Presley mini-series, with **Jonathan Rhys-Meyer** ("Bend It Like Bekham") starring as Elvis.

The mini-series will also star Camryn Manheim ("The Practice") as Elvis' mother, and will make use of original recordings of Presley's hits.

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From Jean-Jacques Annaud, the highly acclaimed director of The Bear, comes a heartwarming story about the power of friendship and the bond between brothers.
SYNOPSIS:
Two mischievous twin tiger cubs live a carefree life in an exotic jungle amidst beautiful ancient ruins. But one day, an act of fate forces them apart, as one is sold off to the circus and the other becomes the pampered pet of a governor's son. Witness their remarkable journey as these tigers grow up, reunite and embark on an incredible adventure to find their way home.
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MTRCB Rating: G
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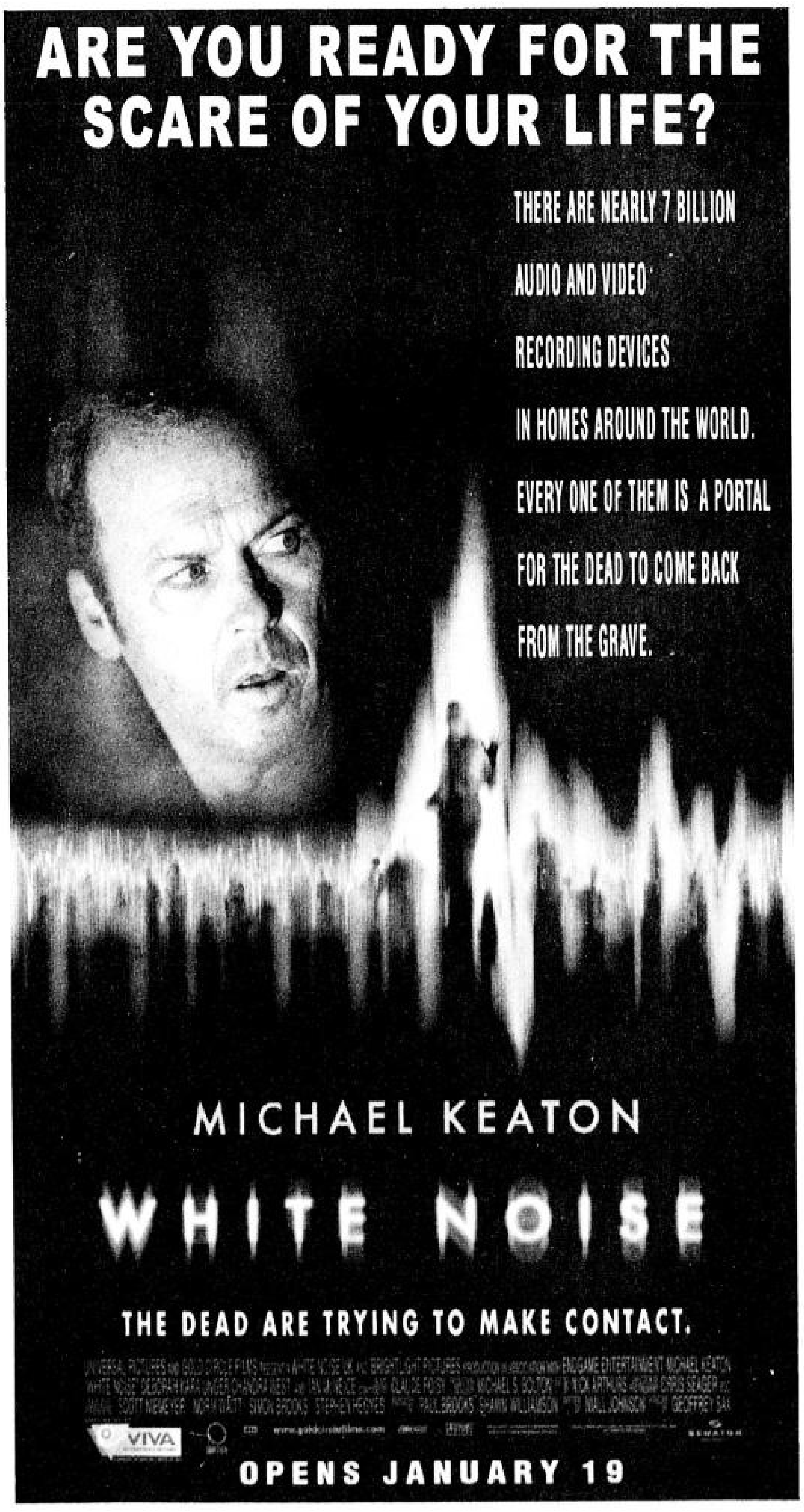
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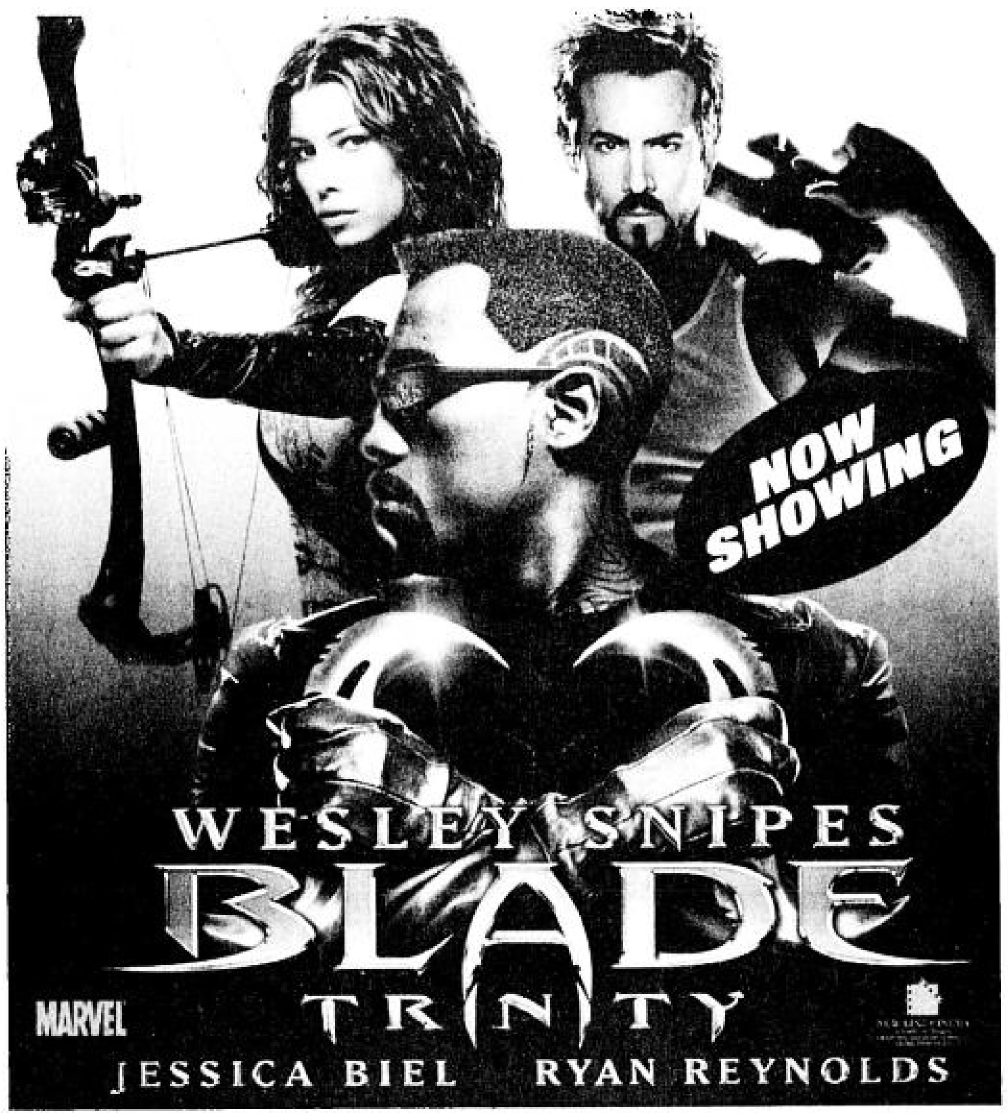

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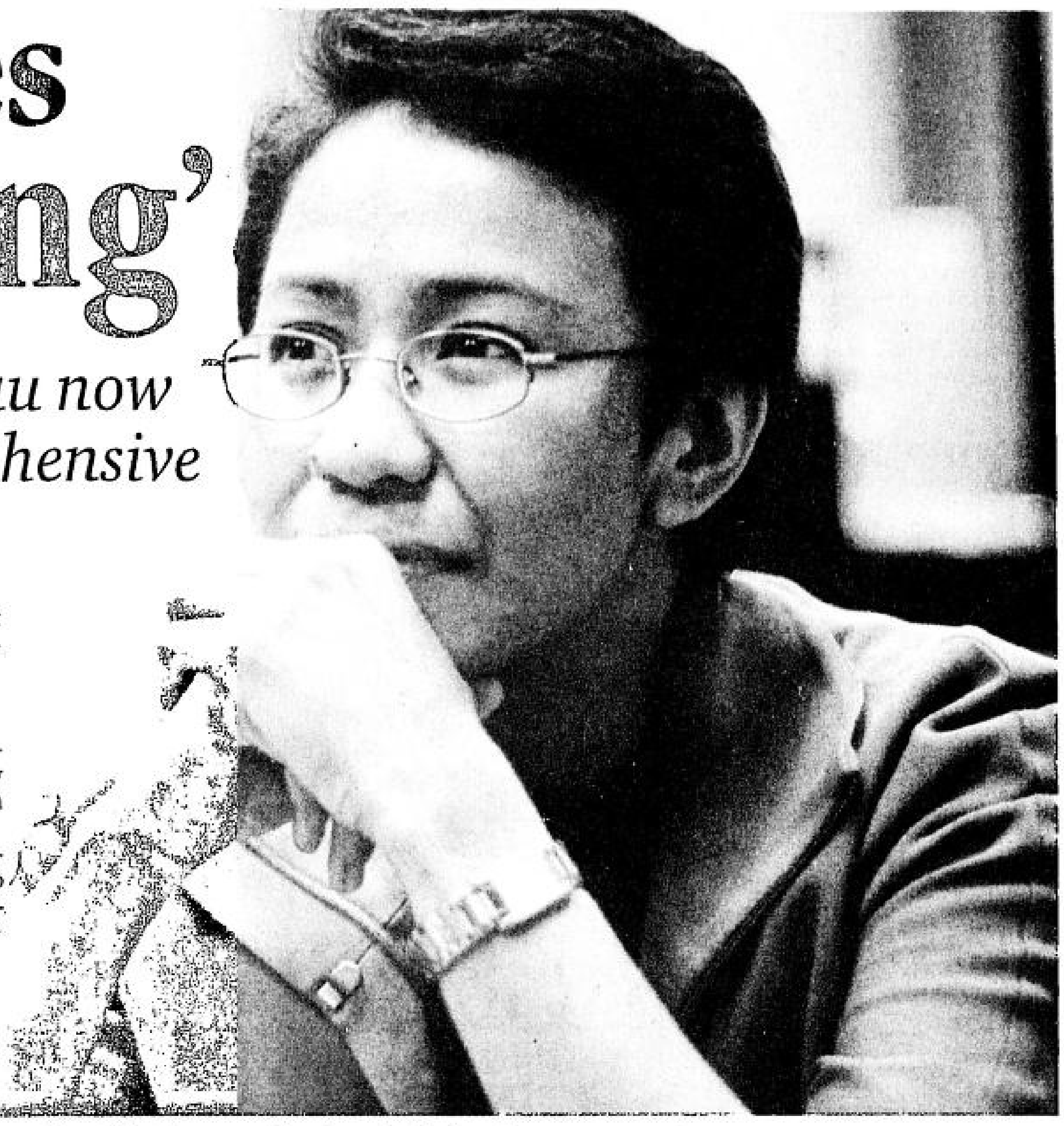
Maria Ressa does 'the right thing'

CNN's ex-chief of Southeast Asia bureau now 'designs, develops, implements comprehensive training program' for ABS-CBN



SHE realized it was time to "set down roots"—where else but here?

MITCH MAURICIO

By Marinel R. Cruz

AFTER being the most visible Filipino face on the Cable News Network (CNN) for more than 17 years, award-winning broadcast journalist Maria Ressa says joining ABS-CBN as training consultant is "the right thing to do."

Ressa, former CNN bureau chief for Southeast Asia, joined Channel 2 as news and current affairs division training consultant only last Jan. 3. She is now responsible "for designing, developing and implementing a comprehensive training program" for the local network, according to a memorandum from network president Cito Alejandro and chair Gabby Lopez.

Ressa is also "tasked to provide input to employee's performance evaluation," the memo added.

Ressa said her job now is more systematic. "It's dealing with people on a much bigger and broader scale. At CNN, I was responsible for a region but I was able to hire and fire quickly. Here, the concerns are different. There are different skills that I want to learn and in the process bring those skills that I learned from CNN to the people in the field here who can benefit."

"Why did I leave CNN for here?" Ress told INQUIRER Entertainment in a one-on-one interview in her office in the ABS-CBN compound in Quezon City. "There are two reasons, first of which is that I realized that I'd got to the age when I started thinking about my life. 'Where's my personal life? How am I living my life? Am I balancing it?'

"I also thought it was time to set down roots. And when I thought about where, I thought it was going to be in the Philippines."

RP-born, NY-raised

Ressa was born in the Philippines but was raised in New York. She graduated from Princeton University.

In 1986, she received a Fullbright Fellowship to take up graduate studies at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

She helped colleague Cheche Lazaro form the investigative program "The Probe Team" as a writer and producer. "Probe" first aired on ABS-CBN.

In 1988, CNN hired Ressa as its bureau chief in Manila. Before long, she had taken over as bureau chief of CNN Jakarta and, eventually, Southeast Asia.

"I know how to do news with my eyes closed," Ressa declared. "I know the challenges of it, the adrenaline of it. I know what the core of the news is. But I feel I'm still young enough to still want to learn and to want to have more impact in a different way."

But will she not miss going on cam?

"It was a nice side effect of it, but I started out as Cheche's producer," she said.

An American accent

"I think CNN picked me because it wanted [someone with an] American accent and Cheche didn't have it," she added. "I wasn't burned out. What I was was looking for meaning. I've done every breaking news story. I know all the problems. Increasingly, I was finding that doing the breaking news story wasn't enough and I might not have been doing them for the right reasons.

"You shouldn't be a journalist if you're just hooked on the adrenaline of it. The adrenaline is merely the byproduct of a mission that you have. Journalism is a profession because unlike an accountant or an engineer, you are there. You're held to higher than the normal standards because your goal is to try to help society be better.

"I've had a wonderful stint [with CNN]. But there are cycles in your life, and if you hold on to a cycle too long, you're going to miss the next one.

"I was home in my apartment for an average of about 80 days in a year," she said. "My plants died. CNN would call. We [only] had eight people to cover the entire region. So anytime there was a story, I picked my bag and ran. My life was not my own. There was something exciting about it, but you couldn't grow old in that job.

"It's funny, you'll see that most of the foreign correspondents in the region who stay at it much longer are men," she pointed out. "Most of them tend to get divorced. There are costs and benefits to everything."

Just last month, Ressa said CNN had tried to tap her to cover the tsunami tragedy. "When they called me on the 26th, I asked myself, 'should I go or should I not?' I wanted to go but then I was concerned with two things: I knew my starting date [in ABS-CBN] was Jan. 1, and I thought it was the wrong signal to not be there for your first day in a new job and a new life.

"The other thing is that my parents were visiting the Philippines for the first time in 14 years. Could I leave my parents? Well, they left last Jan. 11."

Stories that matter

Ressa said that when she came to Manila in 1986—at the height of the first Edsa Revolution—to study, she was supposed to stay for only a year, but "I never left because it was exciting [here]."

"I felt like I could create the world, I could help craft the society I lived in, that I had a role to play and it was important," she said. "And more than anything, that's the reason I won't go back to the States, because I feel like I'm not ready to be a cog in a wheel in the States in any media organization.

"I don't want to do the stories that don't matter," she said. "I want to do the stories that matter. That's what CNN had given me.

"But, in the Philippines, I feel like the challenge is bigger. I

MARIA/ A23

"I CAN do news with my eyes closed. I know the adrenaline ... the core of it."

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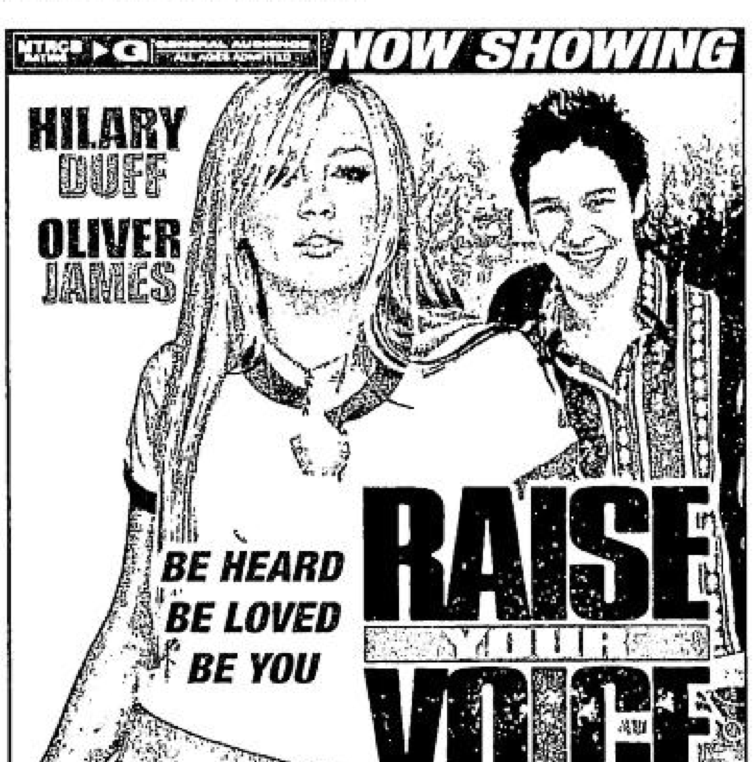

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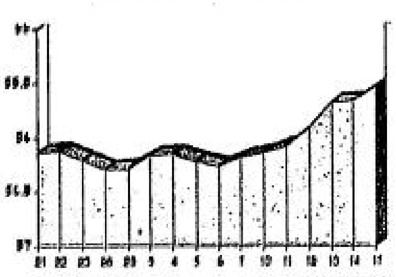

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STOCK MARKET

Stocks near 5-year high

SHARE prices closed 1.77 percent higher at near five-year highs yesterday, with investors snapping up blue-chips with the brightest earnings prospects, dealers said.

They said the peso's sustained rebound against the dollar also supported investor sentiment, as it eased worries about the foreign debt exposure of companies as well as put pressure on the central bank to tighten its monetary policy.

Also supporting the market's bullish tone was positive economic data, such as the disclosure that economic growth in 2004 was likely to beat a government forecast of 6.1 percent, and rising remittances by Filipinos working abroad.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index added 33.15 points to 1,909.18, its best finish in 59 months. It moved between 1,876.03 and 1,914.74 points.

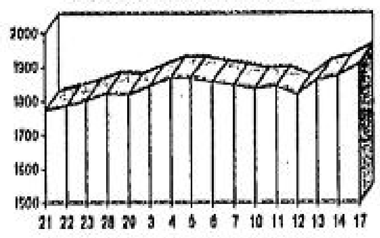
Turnover totaled 3.67 billion shares worth P1.9 billion compared to 2.49 billion shares worth P1.52 billion traded on Friday.

The broader all-shares index rose 4.97 points to 1,163.92.

Gainers led losers 60 to 28, with 41 stocks unchanged.

The peso averaged 55.528 to the dollar at noon, with the local unit extending gains made last week amid the upbeat tone of regional currencies and hopes for an improvement in the country's fiscal situation. *AFP*

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

By Michelle V. Remo

TREASURY bill rates dropped across all maturities yesterday, reversing their upward movement in the previous auction, as banks' high level of liquidity forced them to scramble for the risk-free government securities.

Treasury officials also credited the positive fiscal data for 2004 that the Department of Finance will release before the end of the month. The national government's budget deficit for 2004 is estimated to be at P180 billion, or much lower than the P197.8-billion target.

The bellwether 91-day treasury bill rate, used by banks as a benchmark in pricing loans, declined by 43 basis points to 7.44 percent. (100 basis points is equivalent to one percentage point.) Demand for the three-month debt paper was robust as tenders reached P14.16 billion, or more than double the government's offering of P6 billion.

"If we sustain the improvement in the (fiscal) numbers, then it would be even more encouraging for the market. There are a lot of measures—both administrative and legislative—that we are implementing, and we should see the fruits of those measures shortly," National Treasurer Norma L. Lasala said in a press briefing after yesterday's auction.

The 182-day bills fetched a rate of 8.685 percent, or 29.6 basis points lower than the previous auction, as demand reached twice as much as the government's offering of P4.5 billion at P9.01 billion.

The rate for 364-day bills declined by 24 basis points to 9.782 percent after breaching the psychological level of 10 percent two weeks ago. The one-year debt note was also significantly oversubscribed, as tenders reached P10.75 billion compared with the government's scheduled borrowing from the one-year debt paper of only P4.5 billion.

The Bureau of Treasury accepted P15 billion worth of bids from all tenors—P6 billion for the 91-day, and P4.5 billion each for the 182- and 364-day—thus raising in full the amount it intended to borrow from yesterday's auction.

Lasala said the market's showing of a strong appetite for government securities was despite the robust corporate lending activities by banks. "Corporate lending is on the rise, but government securities are still the best form of investment because there's a lot of value in them," she said.

The Treasury raised an additional P2 billion worth of four-year treasury bonds through a tap facility last week. The decision to open a tap facility for the four-year debt paper was due to the huge demand for it during an auction last Tuesday.

The appetite for the four-year bonds was still strong in the secondary market, as it was already fetching a rate of 11.7 percent, Lasala said. The rate was lower than the 11.969-percent rate at which the Treasury sold the four-year bonds through the tap facility.

RP execs among most stressed worldwide

By Ronnel W. Domingo

FILIPINO entrepreneurs—along with their Indian counterparts—ranked sixth among those who said they were more stressed than a year ago, according to a recent survey of independent firms worldwide.

According to Grant Thornton, an international membership organization of independent businesses, its 2005 International Business Owners Survey showed that 53 percent of Filipino businessmen felt their stress levels increased.

Grant Thornton said the study was conducted in the autumn of 2004 or before the Asian tsunami struck last December.

Respondents comprised at least 6,000 business owners in 24 countries in Asia, North America, Europe, Africa and Australia/Oceania.

Its findings showed that 39 percent of all respondents believed stress levels shot up by more than a third.

Asian business owners topped the list with 69 percent of respondents from Taiwan saying their stress levels "had increased or increased significantly" in just one

RP/B6

STRESS
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BIR misses 2004 target by P6B

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue, the biggest revenue provider among government agencies, missed by P6 billion its collection target for 2004, owing partly to the loss of several sources of tax.

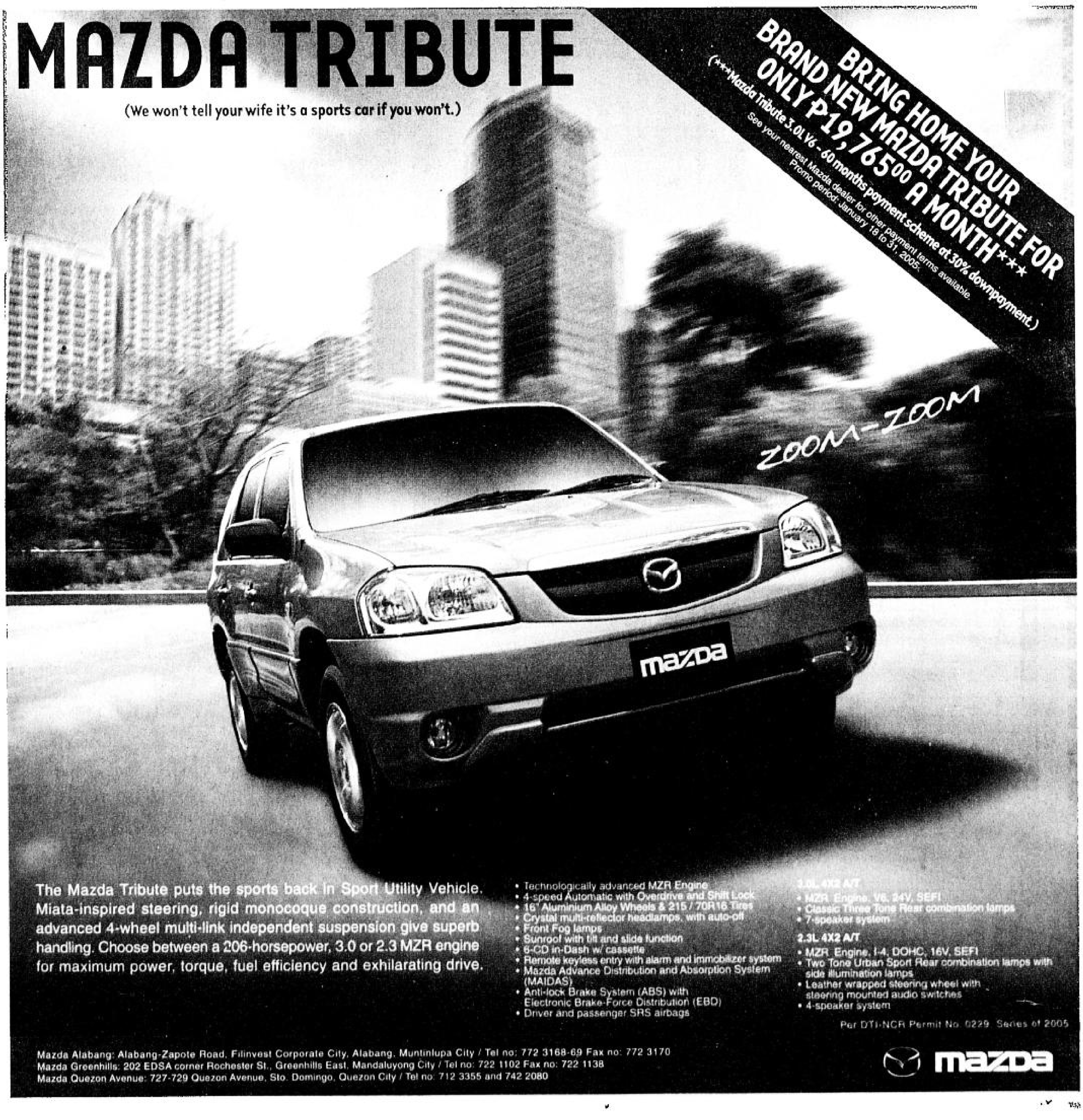
The BIR yesterday reported that its tax collection for 2004 reached only P470.04 billion compared with the official target of P476.04 billion.

Accounting for over 60 percent of the national government's revenue source, the BIR's failure to meet its collection goal would have a negative impact on the budget-deficit performance of the national government. However, the BIR's performance was not expected to significantly drag down the government's fiscal standing last year, as projections for the 2004 deficit were actually optimistic.

Officials said the 2004 budget deficit could actually hit as low as P180 billion, compared with the P197.8-billion target.

Robust collection by other agencies accompanied by tight spending were cited as reasons for the better-than-programmed budget deficit, the official announcement of which will be made before the end of the month.

The BIR said several revenue sources were lost last year, such as after the electronic transactions of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the trading of stocks in the secondary market were exempted from the documentary stamp tax. *Michelle V. Remo*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mazda

US icon creates 'bright minds' among RP kids

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

CORPORATE CITIZEN

FOR more than 20 years, McDonald's has been putting smiles on the faces of Filipino children who consider a burger, French fries or chocolate sundae a slice of childhood heaven.

But in recent years, Ronald McDonald House Charities, the charity arm of McDonald's, has been putting smiles of a more permanent variety—one that lingers long after the last crumb of a Big Mac.

Its vision is to help provide a brighter future for Filipino children. One way is through its outreach project called Bright Minds, which was envisioned to encourage Filipino children to get ahead in academics by honing basic reading skills.

McDonalds' Phils. chair George Yang told the INQUIRER the project was conceived four years ago out of the grim realization that as many as 40 percent of school-aged children in the National Capital Region lack reading skills.

"How successful a country becomes depends on its citizens' abilities in science and math, and those abilities cannot be developed without reading. That is the basic skill," Yang said.

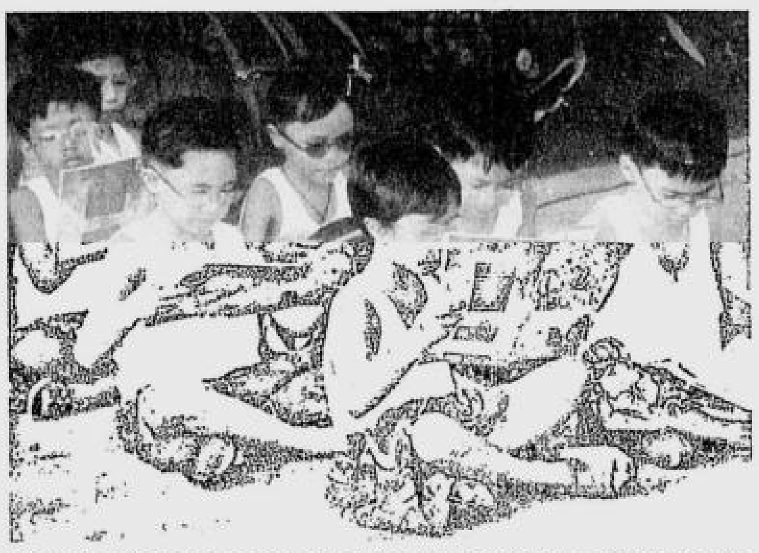
Thus, McDonalds, in cooperation with the Department of Education, implemented the Bright Minds project.

It took about a year to develop the teaching manuals and materials, train the teachers and get the support of the pilot schools in Metro Manila.

After a series of intensive workshops, the manuals, which were financed by McDonalds, were distributed to 17 schools, and through 70 Grade 1 teachers, reached out to as many as 4,200 children.

Yang said the Bright Minds reading program was a novel approach to fostering reading skills as it did not stick to tried and tested teaching methods. It injected fun, such as teaching by story telling.

And the results speak for themselves.



RONALD McDonald House Charities, the charity arm of McDonald's, set up a project that aims to encourage Filipino children to get ahead in academics by honing basic reading skills.

"We were happy because after just one year, we found that 98 percent of the children who went through our program were able to read," Yang said.

McDonalds also encouraged the public to join it in its efforts, by providing help centers in all McDonalds stores. Every Happy Meal sold also means 50 centavos more into the funds of RMHC.

Concerned citizens could come to the store and drop their donations for the Bright Minds project. And it does not cost much to help in the reading campaign.

The curriculum tool for the Grade 1 students costs P11,200. It consists of 32 storybooks, a teacher's lesson plan and student's worksheets.

Posters about the project were likewise prominently displayed to entice McDonalds' thousands of customers to join in the campaign to get more Filipino children to read.

"We are targeting more Filipino schoolchildren because the impact on the community is tremendous. This is not about making money for the group," Yang said.

The Bright Minds project is the latest in a series of projects that McDonald's has invested in to help the Filipino youth and the community.

Since October 2003, McDonald's has put up some 41 McDonald's Villages in slum areas, to provide residents with a nice facility for the community to get together.

This is under its Bayan Ko, Love Ko program in partnership with Gawad Kalinga. The plan is to put up 100 new homes for 100 families with 300 children.

"We try to help the country in our own way by putting up these houses in slum areas. With landscaping, the area was turned into a village. The residents were very happy and that always makes my day," Yang said.

McDonald's also put up four day care centers in Makati, Mandaluyong, Quezon City and Pasay. And like the McDonald's Villages, the Bahay Bulilit day care centers were set up in depressed communities.

The local government provides the land, while McDonald's provides P1.3 million, for the architecture and the construction.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development, on the other hand, provides volunteer teachers to encourage the community's children to take part in worthwhile activities.

Another two will be set up in Taytay, Rizal and Manila.

Yang said McDonald's in the Philippines has always put value in being a good corporate citizen, but it was only recently when the company put order into its outreach projects, to ensure that every peso goes a long way.

"We were trying to do so many things before. Now we are more focused and organized and the employees appreciate it. They know that the company they work for is responsible. That makes us more proud to work for the company," Yang said.

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Dutch entertainment

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

NOBODY knew why the Department of Labor and Employment (Dole), did not seem interested in saving the jobs of some 80,000 Filipinos working in Japan.

Nobody knew, that is, until this cute administration of Gloriaetta announced that it had brought down the OFFICIAL unemployment figure by using a little magic.

"Official," in this sense, simply means the figure comes from the government. "Official" does not always mean that only the government believes it, okay!

***

NOW, we really have some big time economic headaches, such as the fiscal crisis, the rotting infrastructure, the insatiable graft and corruption, the high unemployment rate, etc.

That's why, in business gatherings nowadays, the main gripe is still about the inaction of this cute administration of Gloriaetta. You know—what has she done so far?

Business people may complain every now and then, but the truth is they've been whining since the Aguinaldo administration. And, as the surveys show, this cute trying -hard-to-be-popular administration cannot do enough to please big business.

This time, though, it did something for the ordinary people. By tinkering with the unemployment figure, it brought down the OFFICIAL number of jobless.

And it did everything only on paper. It changed a bit its way of computing the number of jobless, by changing some terminology, and the number dropped just like that.

No wonder then, with such a resounding success in the job market, the Dole could not care less about the 80,000 Filipinos who work in Japan—legally.

***

RECENTLY, the Japanese government adopted a strict policy on what it called "entertainers" from other countries who work in Japan.

It is quite understandable. The US government was pressuring Tokyo on "human trafficking." The Japanese government must move quickly to please the Americans.

And so what did the Japanese do? It imposed strict requirements on Filipino "entertainers." The requirements are so rigorous they are precisely impossible to meet.

That these requirements apply to all nationalities, of course, goes without saying. It's just that more than 60 percent of the "entertainers" there come from the Philippines.

And so to help those 80,000 or so Filipinos working in Japan at present, the Department of Foreign Affairs is pushing for a moratorium on the new requirements.

Spearheading the move, according to GROs, *este*, my "contacts" in the business, are DFA undersecretary Jose Brilliantes and our ambassador to Japan Domingo Siazon.

Our magician Dole, on the other hand, is not lifting a finger. Why should it? It already did its job by reducing the number of the unemployed, albeit only on paper. Now that's entertainment!

***

IF YOU think the Dole accepts the Japanese imposition on Filipinos lying down, or face down, as the case may be, it may also be due to a moralist standpoint.

The high and mighty, plus the moralists, think low of Filipinos working in Japan. They even have a word for them—"Japayuki." Let's be frank about it. The hidden meaning of the word "Japayuki" is "prostitute."

To be sure, there are prostitutes among those Filipinos in Japan—both male and female. But not all of them are!

In fact, based on OFFICIAL figures, most of them are legitimate musicians, singers and dangers. What can they do? Show business is the only kind of work they grew up learning.

They can say what they want to say but it's hard to quarrel with numbers. The 80,000 jobs for Filipinos in Japan are still jobs and they are keeping alive half a million people here.

Everybody here can sing and dance, including three Cabinet members who once thought they were good enough to sell tickets to the public for their "concerts.".

***

WE BROUGHT upon ourselves the bad image of Filipinos working in Japan. A lot of them are just prostitutes, we say. Really?

Yearly reports of the Japanese police did not show the Filipinos as the leading nationality of foreign prostitutes in that country. The International Labor Organization in Japan even reported that Filipinos were the least violators of human trafficking laws.

Of the 130,000 or so foreign entertainers allowed to work in Japan, 60 percent are Filipinos.

They go there on their own, perhaps driven by economic hardship here, but still they are not physically dragged or drugged.

The ILO reports that Thai women are the most trafficked women in Japan. In the past four years, 173 Thai women were reported to have been smuggled for sexual employment in the past four years.

From 2000 to 2002, only 18 Filipino women were reported to have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. Last year, there was none.

Yet we think those "national shame" who are working in Japan are the rule rather than the exception.

Those saying such things are perhaps either too old to do sing and dance numbers or too ugly to make it as house-to-house promo girls for detergents.

***

BUT let's stop being moralist snobs for the moment, and let's go into the stringent policy of Japan against Filipino entertainers in response to the US government.

There are only two requirements of the Japanese government on foreign entertainers, namely, one, they must have two years of formal courses in music, dancing or the arts, and two, they must have at least two years of relevant experience outside Japan.

Look, the best musicians in the whole region's best hotels and what-have-you are all Filipinos who never had a minute of formal training in music.

Yet they are the ones who are giving "formal lessons" here on every musical instrument on earth. Now you require them to take formal courses? For two years?

Really, you can send them to all the formal courses all you want, but the best musicians are always self-taught. Most musicians are. Whoever said learning to play a musical instrument is not a lonely calling, must be from Dole.

***

AND WHAT do we think about the requirement for two years of "experience" outside Japan? It means that all those working in Japan now must get out, work elsewhere for two years, before they can go back. Tall order indeed!

Now, even with the new policy of the Japanese government, our Dole is saying that around 80,000 entertainers would qualify.

I hear otherwise from the business sector. Well, small business sector. You know—the recruiting agencies. They say that virtually no one will qualify.

Thus, to prepare the entertainers, the local recruiting agencies are asking for a two-year moratorium on the requirements.

If the requirements are imposed immediately, it is just like saying that Filipino entertainers cannot work in Japan anymore. Who will do the sing and dance numbers—the Dutch?

***

TO MAKE up for jobs lost by the Filipino "entertainers" in Japan, Dole is proposing we send nurses and engineers there instead.

Being the noblest of the noble professions, as against for instance the oldest profession, nursing can change the image of the Philippines abroad.

As I said, however, our "national shame" in Japan numbers about 80,000 entertainers, known as OPAs, or "overseas performing artists."

The opening in Japan is only for about 200 nurses, even including caregivers. This is the alternative which the Dole is pushing for, mind you.

What an alternative, really! The country can perhaps change its image, which is not even a certainty, by the way, but half a million people will go hungry.

Those Filipinos in Japan, moreover, send here about $1 billion a year—not peanuts for a country struggling to keep a decent credit rating abroad.

In the end, for those Filipinos, it is a fight between moral issues and economic reality. You know what, in the real world, the stomach always wins.

***

NOW I will cut the fingers of those who say there are no Filipinos working as prostitutes in Japan. I am sure there are Filipino prostitutes there of all three genders. But so do other nationalities, including Japanese.

The point is, what is our government doing about it?

Our own regulators are too lenient, meaning, they can be bought, and so they allow "fake" entertainers to get employment there.

So who suffers but those in the legitimate business? They are the real musicians and the real singers. I myself have friends and neighbors who work in Japan as musicians. I will floor down anybody who says they are prostitutes.

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    - Looking at the Big Picture
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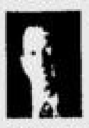

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BSP seen taking 49% stake in credit bureau system

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas was given the go-ahead to acquire up to a 49-percent stake in a centralized credit bureau system that will soon be put up in the country.

In an interview, BSP Deputy Governor for bank supervision and examination Alberto Reyes said the policy-making Monetary Board had approved for submission to the Senate its latest version of the proposed credit information bureau bill.

Reyes said the MB, in its meeting last week, had agreed to set the BSP's maximum equity holding in the proposed credit bureau at 49 percent, but the stake could go lower.

The Philippines is currently at the bottom 10 of 145 countries ranked according to the scope of their local private credit bureaus, based on a global report by the World Bank last year.

Although its preference was for the Bankers Association of the Philippines to take such an initiative, the BSP's intervention in the creation of the centralized credit bureau aims to speed up reforms in the country's credit-reporting system.

The credit bureau where the BSP will acquire a minority stake will start assigning identification numbers to Philippine borrowers and likewise pave the way for the transition to a private sector-led system.

Under the proposed centralized credit bureau, all banks operating in the country will provide data on both "positive" and "negative" lists of borrowers to the BSP, which will then process the data.

To date, the Bankers Association of the Philippines has a data-sharing facility which, however, includes only information on delinquent borrowers. In general, banks are still hesitant to share information on good borrowers as they fear this will reduce their competitive edge.

The BSP believes that many banks could have avoided risky loan exposures in the past if they were more aware of their borrowers' outstanding liabilities in other banks.

A World Bank report, titled "Doing Business in 2005: Removing Obstacles to Growth," noted that there were only 34 borrowers covered by the Philippines' private credit bureaus for every 1,000 adult population.

The report recommended regulations or codes of conduct to encourage lenders to participate in private bureaus, discussed how public registries could help compensate for a lack of private information-sharing and explored ways to improve debt recovery in bankruptcy.

The WB report backed reforms to expand access to credit by distributing both positive and negative information, expanding providers of data to the credit registry, making credit registries electronic, introducing universal security for debtors and creditors, establishing registries for all security interests in movables, and permitting out-of-court collateral enforcement.

Banks to require ITRs from all borrowers

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has agreed to issue a new circular that would prevent tax cheats from availing themselves of loans from the banking system.

In an interview, BSP Deputy Governor for bank supervision and examination Alberto Reyes said the MB approved in its meeting last week to require banks to ask for income tax returns (ITRs) from borrowers before approving any loan.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura explained that the new circular would allow banks to strictly monitor whether their borrowers were paying the right taxes. He said the new requirement would not only help the government in plugging revenue loopholes but also boost banks' capability to assess any borrower's financial viability.

"We can't be the extension of the BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue). What we're asking them (banks) to do is to verify that what's being submitted to them is also submitted to the BIR," Buenaventura said.

"We have to make it clear that if the borrower doesn't have an ITR and the banks lend to them, they are violating the rules," he explained.

In the past, banks were required to ask for ITRs of borrowers only when they are giving out unsecured loans. The new circular will make ITR submission a general pre-requisite.

Non-submission of an ITR, Buenaventura said, would thus add risk weights to a particular loan account.

"When you're lending money to someone which is not making money, you have to put up reserves," Buenaventura said.

BSP chief sets policy speech before Finex

BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael B. Buenaventura will deliver a major policy statement on the reforms being pursued for a strong financial and banking system tomorrow at the induction of officers of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (Finex) and Finex Foundation at the Hotel Inter-Continental Manila.

Monetary Board member Melito S. Salazar Jr. heads the Finex Board while outgoing Frank Ysaac will be the chair of the Finex Foundation. Since he joined Finex in March 1985, Salazar has served as Finex vice president for external affairs in 2004, vice president for countryside development in 1996 and director for two terms.

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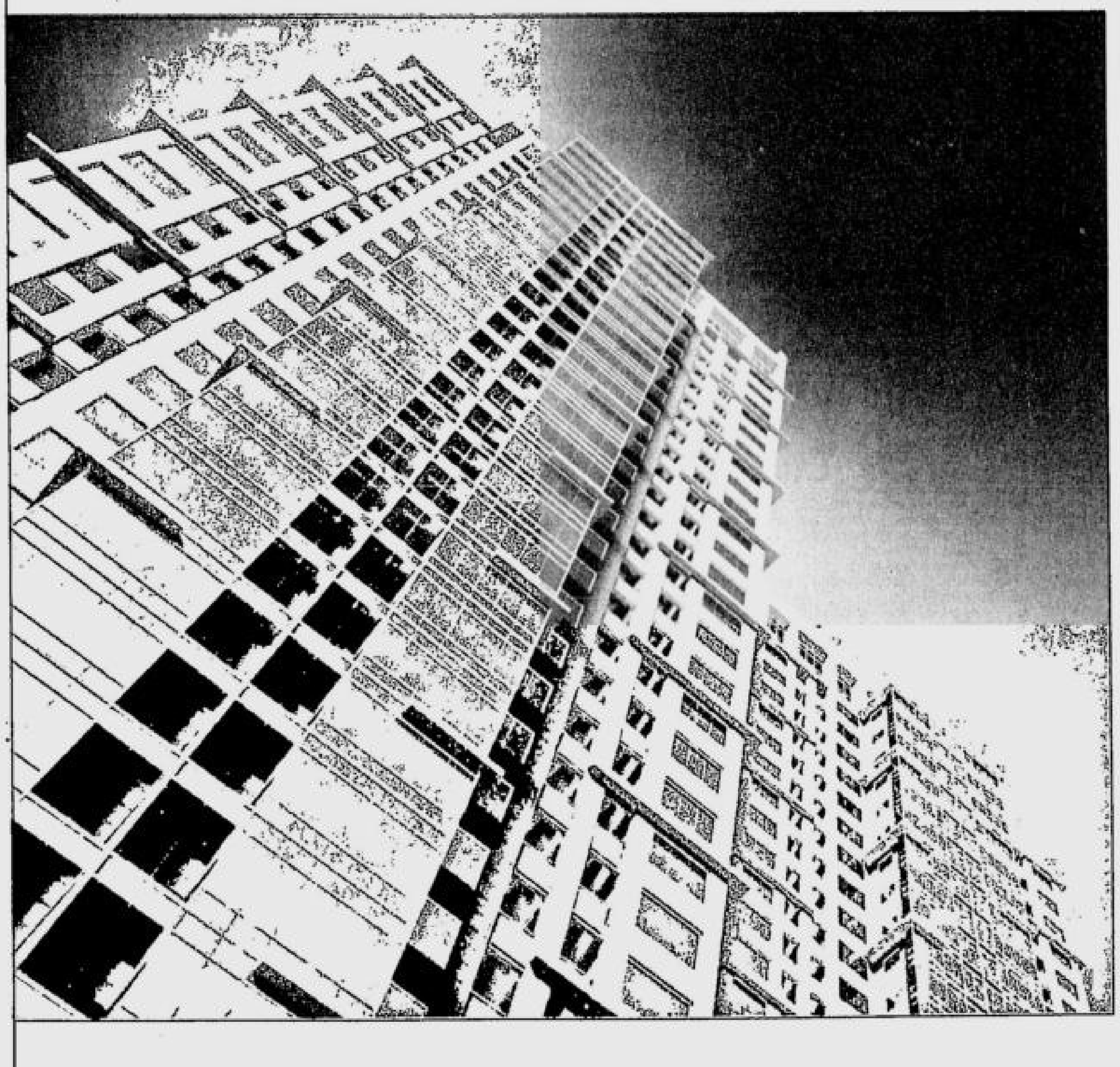

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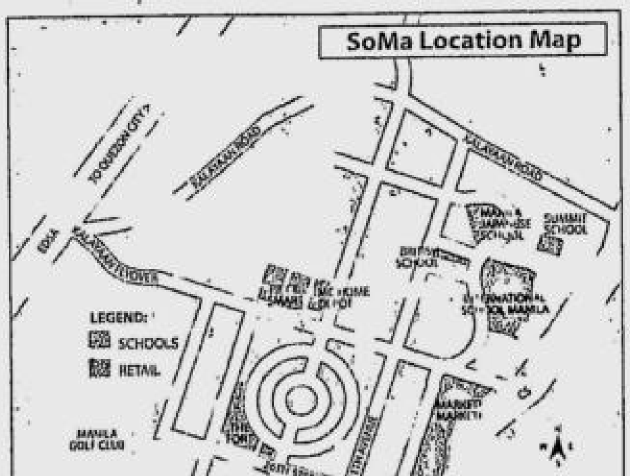
SoMa Location Map



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The hottest stock in town—revised

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

AT THE BEGINNING of each year, I give my stock pick. In 2003, I chose the telecom sector and recommended TEL at P226, which went as high as P1500; and GLOBE AT P400, which touched P1180. In 2004, I chose PCOR at P1.80 on a yield of 11 percent and allowing for the 20 centavos dividend, the stock has doubled. At the end of last year, I already knew what my 2005 stock pick had to be, but I could not wait until January, so I preempted it by writing up FIL HISPANO in November as "The hottest stock in town."

I told my subscribers that if they did not buy the stock, I would excommunicate them. Most of them did at P4.65 to P4.70 and FH has outperformed every stock in the PHISIX. In two months, it has risen 88 percent from its IPO price and 61 percent from its opening price. Most clients could not resist taking a handsome profit and although it is still rising, I have a core of happy subscribers.

So my stock pick for 2005 was FH and my very positive headline, repeated above, indicated this. In view of the extraordinary rise in the share price, it is time to take another look at what is happening. FH, shortly to be known as Advanced Contact Solutions (ACS), has already bagged a contract with a North American client that requires the addition of another 500 seats and this could be doubled to 1,000. So FH is currently demolishing the 9th floor of the Allied Bank Building in Ayala Avenue to add another 700 to 800 seats by next month.

This will increase capacity to 2,500 seats, well above the 2,000 seats indicated in the prospectus. The company is currently negotiating with two other clients and if successful, this could push the total number of seats required to more than 3,000. FH already has a presence on 5 floors of Citibank plus 2 floors of Allied Bank and an option on the 10th floor. The group is so dynamic that they are now looking at buildings in QC and Cubao that would be capable of providing 1,500 to 2,000 additional seats.

On Wednesday, some of the directors will be going to Singapore at the invitation of BNP, a major French bank, and then to a meeting with ABN-Amro, the largest Dutch bank. In the past week, the foreign investment houses, especially Credit Lyonnais (CLSA), have been buying the stock in ever-increasing amounts and on Friday, foreign brokers poured P32 million into FH, resulting in a 70-centavo rise to P7.30. Yesterday, it closed at P7.50, after a high of P7.80.

Is this price justified? Let us take a look. First of all, the 2,000 seats forecast last November is ancient history. The company will have 2,500 by the end of the first quarter with another 9 months still in hand. Assuming that the ongoing contracts are consummated, a figure of 3,000 seats by yearend looks attainable. When I asked the President, VIC ENDAYA whether this was possible, he said that was his target. As my wife is always telling me, size is important, and this applies to call centers as well. Once you have 2,000 seats, companies in North America and Europe regard you as a major player so it becomes progressively easier to obtain large contracts.

He pointed out that the call center industry is only just starting its big expansion and that the total number of seats in the Philippines would grow from 40,000 last year to 60,000 this year and 80,000 next year. He was conservatively expecting FH to get only 1,000 seats a year, but in the last 2 months, the company has moved up from 8th position to 4th. Even with this cautious assessment, it looks to me as if FH will have 3,000 seats by end 2005, 4,000 by 2006 and 5,000 by 2007.

In case you think I am letting my imagination get the better of me, in 2003 there were 1.5 million seats in the US alone. Of these, the Philippines had 20,000 and India 96,000. In 2004 the numbers doubled, but even so, it is only a tiny fraction of the total. As US companies continue to feel this pressure to reduce costs, the trend is clearly to outsource their call center operations to these countries. This points to tremendous growth potential in the coming years and this is the sunrise industry in which to invest.

India has a billion people, 12 times as many as the Philippines, so percentage-wise we are doing better. I believe that we will continue to hold our own because Filipinos speak American English and are familiar with American culture. Indians have their own accent and have to learn the American nasal twang. Furthermore, India is a more conservative country than we are, so it is more difficult for girls to get permission from their family to work night shifts away from home.

So what is the new profit estimate for 2005? Certainly, it is not P250 million that was forecast. In deference to the company's wish to err on the side of caution, I have only assumed 2,500 average for this year, which indicates a net profit of P360 million or 60 centavos a share. This gives a Price/Earning ratio of 12.5. The only other quoted Philippine call center is PEOPLESUPPORT, which is a little bigger and has a presence in the US so it was able to obtain a quotation on the NASDAQ. It sells at 25 times this year's earnings and Indian call centers also sell on this multiple. Based on these figures, FH is still substantially undervalued.

Looking to next year and an average of only 3,000 seats, net profits should rise to at least P500 million or 83 centavos a share. This reduces the Price/Earning ratio to 9. I feel sure that as new contracts are confirmed, I will be upgrading these forecasts but even just maintaining the Price/Earnings ratio at 12.5, next year's target is P10.50. This merely assumes that the current contracts will go through and that the management will go to sleep for the next 21 months. This is not remotely likely and my unofficial target is much higher. Despite the rise, don't sell, and if there is a correction, BUY for long term.

Realizing the importance of revenue growth of call centers, the Board of Investments is giving incentives, such as an income tax holiday and tax-free importation for call centers as most of their revenue is derived from overseas customers and therefore, considered as an exporter of services. The high level of telecom infrastructure and the affordability of office space are added advantages to the Philippines.

One of the things I like about FH is the way it treats its call girls, sorry, I mean contact participants. It has a fantastic recreation center that includes a TV lounge, 2 pool tables and even a massage room that they would not let me use. The employees get 3 breaks including brunch at 1 p.m. Every seat shows the name of the occupants, their achievements and their rewards. The atmosphere is yuppie and the management, from supervisors to directors, is readily available to help out at all times. A happy, informal atmosphere makes for pleasant, patient and friendly participants.

MR. BEARBULL/ B6

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STATEMENT OF CONDITION

(Head Office and Branches)
As of December 20, 2004

ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Items	P	7,528,123,837
Due from Bangko Sentral		16,208,238,898
Due from Other Banks		1,213,557,199
Interbank Loans Receivable		14,211,831,741
Trading Account Securities (Net)		261,239,264
Investment in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		96,228,815,209
Loans, Discounts and Advances (Net)		116,107,969,891
Underwriting Accounts (Net)		-
Equity Investments (Net)		6,267,600,796
Bank Premises, Furniture,Fixtures & Equipment (Net)		5,019,296,770
Other Assets (Net):		
Property Owned/Acquired		14,983,262,225
Others		12,926,253,784
TOTAL ASSETS	P	290,956,189,594
LIABILITIES		
Demand Deposits	P	74,146,148,170
Savings Deposits		120,329,432,479
Time Deposits		21,909,244,269
Special/Other Deposits		1,797,365,400
Due to Bangko Sentral		92,983,113
Due to Banks		96,406,394
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders		1,369,539,295
Bills Payable:		
BSP-Rediscounting/Special Programs		560,269,291
Interbank Borrowings		3,657,578,400
Deposits Substitutes		237,058,512
Others		27,458,166,789
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits		4,425,981,439
Other Liabilities		13,662,434,757
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P	269,742,608,308
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		
Capital Stock	P	10,871,000,000
Surplus		7,733,005,300
Surplus Reserves		2,759,387,137
Other Capital Accounts		(149,811,151)
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		21,213,581,286
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	290,956,189,594
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		
Unused Commercial Letters of Credit	P	5,866,494,065
Bills for Collection		707,233,141
Spot/Future Exchange Sold		6,196,957,000
Spot/Future Exchange Bought		(731,817,500)
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements		
Invested in:		
- Government Securities		13,765,918,876
- Other Securities, Debt Instruments and Shares of Stocks		39,030,113
- Loans and Discounts		295,285,487
- Other Assets		4,262,156,328
Accountabilities:		
- Trust and Other Fiduciary		10,634,010,408
- Common Trust Funds		2,537,351,804
- Investment/Fund Management		5,191,028,592
Other Contingent Accounts		40,486,101,174
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS	P	70,887,368,684

Other Information

1.	Deposits of:		
	a. Government	P	142,102,943,316
	b. Banks		4,726,896,840
	c. Trust Department		553,004,495
2.	Compliance with Magna Carta Law:		
	a. Prescribed Ratio of Compliance for 6% (Small Enterprises)		21.57%
	b. Prescribed Ratio of Compliance for 2% (Medium Enterprises)		5.35%
3.	Amount of Non-Performing Loans		24,138,137,738*
4.	Ratio of Non-Performing Loans to Total Loan Portfolio		18.25 %
5.	Amount of Classified Loans and Other Risk Assets		52,647,498,928
6.	General Provision for Loan Losses		1,443,692,722
7.	Specific Provision for Loan Losses		16,745,638,276
8.	Return on Equity (ROE)		10.97%
9.	Amount of DOSRI Loans/Advances		5,710,010,932
10.	Ratio of DOSRI Loans/Advances to Total Loan Portfolio		3.85%
11.	Amount of Past Due DOSRI Loans/Advances		17,996

** Includes Loans Classified as "Loss" which are fully covered by Allowance for Probable Losses amounting to P5,037,616,212.50*

We, ANDRES C. SARMIENTO and ALFONSO B. CRUZ, JR. of the above-mentioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above Statement of Condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Sgd. ANDRES C. SARMIENTO
FVP-Controllership Group

Sgd. ALFONSO B. CRUZ, JR.
EVP, Institutional Banking Sector

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 13th day of January 13, 2005 in the City of Manila, affiants exhibiting to me their Residence Certificate No. 06018881, issued in Manila on January 12, 2005 and Residence Certificate No. 06179855 issued in the City of Manila on January 11, 2005.

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Book No. II
Series of 2005

GERVACIO B. ORTIZ, JR.
Notary Public
Until December 31, 2005
PTR No. 2709900
Issued on January 5, 2004
Manila

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CONDITION

(Bank and Financial Subsidiaries)
As of December 20, 2004

ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Items	P	7,532,103,710
Due from Bangko Sentral		16,208,238,898
Due from Other Banks		1,336,853,483
Interbank Loans Receivable		14,211,831,741
Trading Account Securities (Net)		261,239,264
Investment in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		96,255,422,257
Loans, Discounts and Advances (Net)		116,137,070,648
Underwriting Accounts (Net)		-
Equity Investments (Net)		5,517,754,376
Bank Premises, Furniture,Fixtures & Equipment (Net)		5,224,758,931
Other Assets (Net):		
Property Owned/Acquired		15,018,231,297
Others		13,886,761,683
TOTAL ASSETS	P	291,590,266,287
LIABILITIES		
Demand Deposits	P	74,132,324,708
Savings Deposits		120,325,967,075
Time Deposits		21,909,244,269
Special/Other Deposits		1,797,365,400
Due to Bangko Sentral		92,983,113
Due to Banks		96,406,394
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders		1,375,383,828
Bills Payable:		
BSP-Rediscounting/Special Programs		560,269,291
Interbank Borrowings		3,657,578,400
Deposits Substitutes		237,058,512
Others		27,458,166,789
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits		5,013,501,278
Other Liabilities		13,704,785,099
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P	270,361,034,156
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		
Capital Stock	P	10,871,000,000
Surplus		7,748,553,763
Surplus Reserves		2,759,489,519
Other Capital Accounts		(149,811,151)
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		21,229,232,131
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	291,590,266,287
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		
Unused Commercial Letters of Credit	P	5,866,494,065
Bills for Collection		707,233,141
Spot/Future Exchange Sold		6,196,967,000
Spot/Future Exchange Bought		(731,817,500)
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements		
Invested in:		
- Government Securities		13,765,918,876
- Other Securities, Debt Instruments and Shares of Stocks		39,030,113
- Loans and Discounts		295,285,487
- Other Assets		4,262,156,328
Accountabilities:		
- Trust and Other Fiduciary		10,634,010,408
- Common Trust Funds		2,537,351,804
- Investment/Fund Management		5,191,028,592
Other Contingent Accounts		40,486,101,174
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS	P	70,887,368,684

Other Information

1.	Deposits of:		
	a. Government	P	142,102,943,316
	b. Banks		4,726,896,839
	c. Trust Department		553,004,495
2.	List of Bank's Financial Subsidiaries		
	a. LBP Leasing Corporation		
	b. LBP Financial Services, SPA		
	c. LBP Remittance Co., USA		

We, ANDRES C. SARMIENTO and ALFONSO B. CRUZ, JR. of the above-mentioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above Statement of Condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Sgd. ANDRES C. SARMIENTO
FVP-Controllership Group

Sgd. ALFONSO B. CRUZ, JR.
EVP, Institutional Banking Sector

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Manila

Member: Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (Deposits insured up to P250,000.00)

URC hikes notes issue to $200M

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

GOKONGWEI-LED food and beverage company Universal Robina Corp. is refinancing maturing debts next year and funding expansion of existing plants in Indonesia and Thailand with funds raised by its offshore subsidiary from a recent international and domestic offering.

Sources said URC has successfully raised $200 million from a fixed-rate issuance by URC Philippines Ltd. The notes are guaranteed by parent firm URC.

In a disclosure yesterday, URC Philippines Ltd., a wholly owned offshore subsidiary of URC, said it had issued an additional $75 million, 8.25-percent, seven-year notes due 2012. The company earlier raised $125 million worth of the seven-year notes.

Investment banks Credit Suisse First Boston (Europe) and JP Morgan Securities Ltd. were tapped as joint issue managers of the notes offering.

Sources had said URC would use proceeds from the proposed debt offer to refinance outstanding loans of around $60 million due in 2006.

In 1996, Universal Robina (Cayman) Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary, issued $100 million in guaranteed notes due on Dec. 19, 2006.

URC is boosting its regional presence as it earmarked roughly $25 million for the expansion program.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 17, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco De Oro Univ. Bank	27.5	28	27	27.5	444,100
Bank Of The Phil. Islands	53.5	54.5	53.5	54.5	457,800
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	47	48.5	47	48.5	48,300
Export And Ind. Bank Inc.	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.42	2,040,000
International Exch. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	349,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26	26.5	25.5	26	131,000
Philippine National Bank	22	22.5	22	22.5	4,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	14	14	10,000
Security Bank Corp.	28.5	29	28.5	29	14,000
Union Bank Of The Phil.	24	24.25	24	24.25	1,100
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	171	171	171	171	100
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	11,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1790	1790	1790	1790	80
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18	18.25	18	18	68,100
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.94	2.02	1.94	1.96	45,929,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	910	940	910	940	112,160
Ipeople Inc.	3.9	4	3.8	3.8	255,000
Island Info And Tech Inc.	0.045	0.049	0.045	0.048	2,600,000
Mla. Broadcasting Co.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	184,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.3	20,993,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1360	1425	1360	1405	578,890
Ivantage Corp.	0.65	0.66	0.65	0.65	990,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.012	0.01	0.01	138,100,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.75	16	15.75	16	92,400
Manila Electric Co. B	25	25.5	25	25	1,006,800
Petron Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	1,578,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.14	2.14	2.14	2.14	13,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	22,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	16,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.36	380,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.06	1.08	1.04	1.04	230,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	1,510,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3	3.1	2.9	3	8,794,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3	3	2.95	2.95	70,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	510,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	136,000
Pancake House Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	38,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.33	30,000
San Miguel Corp. A	58	58.5	58	58.5	182,500
San Miguel Corp. B	78	78	77.5	78	2,500
Universal Robina Corp.	9.5	9.6	9.5	9.5	34,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	270,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0055	0.0065	0.0055	0.0065	249,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.006	0.0065	0.006	0.0065	82,000,000
Ayala Corp.	7.3	7.4	7.2	7.3	7,674,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.4	3.45	3.4	3.45	3,220,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11	10.75	11	3,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.026	0.026	0.025	0.025	10,700,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.78	1.86	1.78	1.84	778,000
APC Group Inc.	0.0975	0.12	0.0975	0.12	22,000,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.008	161,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.46	1.5	1.46	1.5	12,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	50,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	21.25	21.25	21	21.25	8,800
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.73	0.77	0.72	0.76	32,840,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	1,450,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.23	0.235	1,190,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.185	2,440,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.45	4.65	4.3	4.35	17,066,000
Fil-Estate Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	50,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	90,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	7.4	7.8	7.4	7.5	6,131,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	31.5	33.5	31.5	33	1,545,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.0625	0.065	0.0625	0.065	2,200,000
House Of Investments Inc.	0.82	0.82	0.8	0.8	1,300,000
Ionics Inc.	1.48	1.54	1.46	1.46	791,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.15	158,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.42	2.55	2.42	2.48	1,843,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.3	1.32	1.28	1.28	1,449,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.28	0.3	280,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.48	0.5	0.46	0.46	195,730,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	80,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	30,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	190,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.42	570,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3	3	3	3	10,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.13	0.13	740,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	300,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.2	0.2	1,200,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	50,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.6	1.62	1.6	1.62	191,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.06	0.065	0.06	0.065	2,500,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	90,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.62	0.63	0.62	0.62	3,270,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.12	1.06	1.08	5,940,000
Manila Jockey Club	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	63,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	1,100,000
Philippine Racing Club	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	7,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	18.5	18.5	18	18	496,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	700
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.7	7.9	7.7	7.9	6,917,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	190,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.54	0.56	0.52	0.54	190,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.32	0.33	0.31	0.31	20,980,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	400,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.37	0.38	0.36	0.37	9,740,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.22	1.24	13,546,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.18	0.185	0.18	0.18	1,700,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.63	0.65	0.63	0.65	1,000,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	100,000
Primex Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	80,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.4	2.42	2.4	2.42	72,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	270,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.44	1.38	1.38	771,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.3	8.5	8.3	8.4	9,091,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	379,700,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	4.25	4.4	4.15	4.35	999,000
Benguet Corp. A	3	3.2	3	3.2	119,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.5	2.65	2.5	2.65	77,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.41	0.45	0.41	0.43	43,550,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.47	0.49	0.47	0.49	46,160,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.021	0.019	0.02	631,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.027	0.026	0.027	506,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.0055	0.0055	825,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.9	1.02	0.9	1	14,190,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.94	1.1	0.94	1.08	24,970,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.2	3,390,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	30,000,000
Interport Res.	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	2,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	11,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	17,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	70,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	50,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	12,100,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.055	0.0625	0.055	0.0625	14,500,000

DISCLOSURES

JOSE VICENTE CUIZON resigned from his post as special assistant to the president on business development on remittances of **Philippine National Bank**, effective Jan. 31.

* * *

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy certified that **Trans-Asia Oil and Energy Development Corp.** has participating interest in service contracts 6, 14 and 41, as of Dec. 31, 2004, and has no pending violations with the DOE for these contracts.

* * *

ROXAS Holdings Inc. reported that its previously disclosed property dividends shall be paid to shareholders of record as of Oct. 15, 2004, on Feb. 8.

Compiled by D.J. Yap, PDI Research

CURRENCIES

January 17, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.76289289	1.000000	55.6660
Japan	Yen	0.00748	0.009805	0.5458
United Kingdom	Pound	1.426991	1.870500	104.1233
Hongkong	Dollar	0.097857	0.128271	7.1403
Switzerland	Franc	0.64652	0.847458	47.1746
Canada	Dollar	0.62774	0.822842	45.8043
Singapore	Dollar	0.465946	0.610762	33.9987
Australia	Dollar	0.578563	0.758380	42.2160
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.02375	2.652731	147.6669
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.203438	0.266667	14.8443
Brunei	Dollar	0.464527	0.608902	33.8951
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000083	0.000109	0.0061
Thailand	Baht	0.019723	0.025853	1.4391
UAE	Dirham	0.207743	0.272309	15.1584
Euro	Euro	1	1.310800	72.9670
Argentina	Peso	0.259709	0.340426	18.9502
Brazil	REAL	0.281989	0.369631	20.5759
Denmark	Kroner	0.134433	0.176215	9.8092
India	Rupee	0.017518	0.022962	1.2782
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.200788	0.263193	14.6509
Mexico	New Peso	0.068042	0.089190	4.9649
New Zealand	Dollar	0.532412	0.697885	38.8485
Norway	Kroner	0.122116	0.160069	8.9104
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012848	0.016841	0.9375
South Africa	Rand	0.12731	0.166878	9.2894
Korea	Won	0.000732	0.000959	0.0534
Sweden	Kroner	0.110433	0.144756	8.0580
Syria	Pound	0.014696	0.019264	1.0723
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023927	0.031363	1.7459
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000398	0.000522	0.0291

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PSE is second best performing exchange in East Asia

Napocor rate hike only stopped bleeding, says power exec

THE STATE-RUN National Power Corp. needs to charge an additional 32 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) just to cover its operational expenses or another P1.41 per kWh if it wants to erase its net loss, an industry executive said.

Federico Lopez, president of independent power producer First Generation Holdings Corp., said the 98 centavos-per-kWh rate hike which the Energy Regulatory Commission granted to Napocor was just not enough to prevent the power firm from further bleeding.

Napocor in June last year sought a rate adjustment of P1.87 per kWh to enable it to achieve an 8-percent return on rate base, a measure of profitability.

The ERC in September 2004, however, only granted Napocor a provisional authority to hike its rates by an average of 98 centavos per kWh in the three main grids.

Hearings on the final authority for the Napocor rate hike are still ongoing. So far, the ERC has given no indication of whether or not it will give in full the P1.87 per kWh that Napocor is asking for.

Right now, Napocor accounts for one-third of the country's CPSD. *Abigail L. Ho*

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

AMID political uncertainties, fiscal worries and the threat of higher inflation last year, the Philippines emerged as the second best-performing stock exchange among the East Asian bourses with the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) Composite Index climbing 26.4 percent or 380.5 points to 1,822.83 in 2004, the PSE said in a statement yesterday.

In 2003, the Phisix stood at 1,442.37.

The 30-company Index is next only to Indonesia's Jakarta Composite Index, which registered a 44.6-percent spike last year. Trailing behind the PSE is Singapore's Straits Times Index, which posted a 17.1-percent increase.

Three exchanges, on the other hand, posted declines in 2004, namely Stock Exchange of Thailand, and Shenzen Stock Exchange and Shanghai Stock Exchange, both in China.

"The emergence of the Philippines as the second biggest gainer in the Region is a big step in putting back our country in the map of the equities world. It speaks extremely well of our stock market and should entice more companies to do public offerings and more investors to share in their fortunes," said PSE president and chief executive officer Francis Lim.

Data from the PSE's research and international affairs department show the local market was boosted by the achievement of selected stocks and favorable economic performance.

There were gains showed by telecommunication stocks which posted higher revenues from mobile services. Aside from telecommunications, holding companies, banks and property stocks also performed well as they recorded substantial improvement in net income. Mining stocks trailed in the latter part of the year owing to the positive decision of the Supreme Court that allowed foreign investors in the sector.

Trading turnovers reversed their losing trends from 2003. Trading volume rose 230.6 percent to 284.3 billion shares from 86.0 billion shares in 2003 due to higher volume of trades from mining, holding, communication and oil stocks. Value turnover likewise surged by 42.1 percent to P206.6 billion from P145.4 billion in 2003. Net foreign transactions, however, saw a decline by 53.9 percent in 2004 from 60.2 percent the previous year.

Meanwhile, market capitalization expanded by 60.3 percent to P4.8 trillion from P2.97 trillion largely due to significant increase in market prices.

International Exchange Bank's initial public offering (IPO) raised a total of P1.01 billion. The PSE also welcomed the listing by way of introduction of PetroEnergy Resources Corp.

NFA rice procurement to increase to ₱7.2B

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE NATIONAL Food Authority has increased its palay procurement program this year by 80 percent to P7.2 billion in an effort to provide more incentives to small farmers.

NFA Administrator Gregorio Tan Jr. said that they had a successful palay operation last year using only P4 billion.

The success prompted the agency to increase its borrowings for this program in order to acquire some 770,000 metric tons of palay from farmers nationwide, Tan said.

The increase in the NFA's procurement budget is meant to increase farm gate prices of paddy rice in order to raise the farmers' income, he added.

Tan noted that although the Department of Agriculture had imposed a P1 per kilo—from P9 to P10 per kilo—increase in the support price of palay in December 2004, private traders were able to match this price and had limited the state-trading firm's palay purchases in the fourth quarter.

The wet season crop, which is harvested in the fourth quarter, accounts for around 40 percent of the country's rice output.

The Department of Agriculture had approved a P1 increase in the NFA's buying support price to P10 a kilogram for the wet season crop.

The figure is originally the support price provided for the summer crop.

The NFA chief said the Interagency Committee on Rice and Corn recommended the move after rice farmers demanded the increase last month.

According to the National Food Authority, from a level of around P7 per kilogram, production cost has risen to around P7.30 to P7.40 for a kilogram due mainly to the increase in the price of fertilizer.

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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the application of SORSOGON REAL ESTATE PROPERTIES INC. (Bacon Resort Development) with office address at Caricaran, Bacon District, Sorsogon City for registration with the Board of Investments under Book I of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, otherwise known as E.O. 226, as Amended, as a New Operator of Tourist Accommodation Facility (Class "AAA" Resort) with a capacity of Twenty (20) rooms with project site at same office address stated above has been officially accepted on January 14, 2005 and is currently being processed.

Any person with valid objections to or pertinent comments on the above-mentioned application may file his/her objection, in writing under oath, with the BOI within one (1) week from the date of this publication.

Issued this 14th day of January 2005

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Japan consumer confidence worsens, says gov't survey

TOKYO—Japanese consumer confidence worsened in December for the first time in three months, a government survey showed.

The Cabinet Office survey yesterday detailed the sentiment index for ordinary households, which includes views on income and job conditions, falling 4.0 points to 44.0.

An "ordinary household" is classified as one with two or more people.

The survey covered 5,040 ordinary households and 1,680 single-person households.

The government survey was conducted despite signs of economic expansion last year and growing indications that banks are flush with cash.

The Bank of Japan is seen to keep its current liquidity target and stick to its nearly four-year-old super-loose monetary stance.

If, as widely expected, the central bank keeps its policy unchanged at a policy meeting this week, it will have maintained an unprecedentedly massive liquidity target for exactly a year.

"The BOJ will keep its promise of continuing the current monetary easing policy until year-on-year changes in the core consumer price index stabilize above zero," BOJ Governor Toshihiko Fukui said last Thursday. "As the economy is in a recovery trend and corporate profits continue to improve, the effects of the easing policy will strengthen."

The BOJ's Policy Board today opens a two-day policy-setting meeting and will announce a decision tomorrow.

At the meeting, the nine-member board will also review its twice yearly outlook on the economy and prices. In the last report in October it said it expected a recovery to continue and eventually lead to a sustainable growth path.

But recent weakness in exports and production, largely blamed on slowdowns in the United States and Asian economies, and adjustments in the electronics sector, have prompted the central bank to downgrade its economic view for two months running, although policymakers remain upbeat on the outlook.

"Although the impact of inventory adjustments in the IT sector will remain for some time, the economic recovery is expected to continue," Fukui said.

The economy grew just 0.2 percent in July-September on a real annualized basis after a 0.6 percent contraction. in April-June, a reversal from the first quarter of 2004 when it grew 6.8 percent.

In addition, a revamping of calculations by the government in November is seen knocking about one percentage point off the board's growth forecasts, although that would be a purely technical move and would not affect the BOJ's assessment.

BOJ sources say a formal revision of the figures is unlikely in this month's review, although the central bank will probably indicate that the calculation changes would skim about one percentage point from the forecast figures.

In its October report, the board's a median forecast was for the economy to grow 3.6 percent in the year to March and 2.5 percent in 2005/06.

On prices, the board forecast the core consumer price index will gain 0.1 percent year-on-year in 2005/06, but policymakers say it is still unclear if deflation, which has hobbled the economy for over five years, will really be defeated.

"The government and BOJ must continue efforts to overcome deflation," Economics Minister Heizo Takenaka yesterday said.

Board members are also expected to discuss recent moves in the money market, where the central bank is finding it increasingly hard to maintain its liquidity target through market operations as banks have less need to hold excess cash.

But lowering the target would not be easy, and Fukui has previously warned that even a change for technical reasons would run the risk of being interpreted as a policy shift. *Reuters*

MASAMI Kosaka, right, talks to a customer at her family's fruit and vegetable shop in Kobe, western Japan. The Japanese Cabinet Office yesterday announced that consumer confidence worsened in December for the first time in three months. AP

Asia oil demand steady; rates up

SINGAPORE—Singapore oil swaps prices rose in midday trade on Monday, tracking last week's gains on US crude futures, but the crack spreads were squeezed by stubbornly high regional supply.

Dealers put February fuel oil at $195.75 a ton, up from $194.60 on Friday.

Weak fundamentals persisted, though, with fuel oil's February crack spread to the Middle East Dubai crude at around minus $9.30 a barrel from minus $9.00 in the previous session.

Two million tons of fuel oil have been fixed for arrival in February, just when Chinese buying is expected to slow down further with the Lunar New Year.

Brokers quoted February gas oil at $50.50 a barrel, up from $50.30 on Friday.

"Demand doesn't seem to be too bad," said a trader with a major oil firm. "Indonesia demand is steady and Vietnam is importing."

The New York Mercantile Exchange was closed yesterday for the Martin Luther King holiday, but US crude ended 34 cents higher on Friday at $48.38, taking the week's gains to 6.5 percent amid a slew of production hitches, shipping delays and supply anxiety.

Despite higher outright gas oil values, traders said heavy supplies continued to weigh on the front-month February contract. February stood 30 cents below March.

Gas oil's premium to benchmark Dubai crude narrowed to $10.90 a barrel, from about $12 on Friday.

The regrade, the price spread between jet-kerosene and gas oil, was quoted at $2.30, from $2.10 on Friday.

But traders eyed fresh demand with a new tender issued by Japan Airlines for 4.26 million barrels of jet A-1 for the period between April 2005 through March 2006.

Singapore middle distillates prices are set to rise this week on improving kerosene demand due to a colder North Asian winter and as gas oil and jet fuel cargoes move Westwards, traders said on Monday.

Fuel oil prices for the 380-centistoke (cst) grade are expected to keep a firm tone as the market tries to come to terms with a sudden supply shortfall sparked by unresolved problems over the quality of large volumes of Saudi cargoes.

Middle distillate traders said the gas oil crack spread to Dubai crude was expected to strengthen on expectations of rising demand, while players were likely to export more Asian gas oil to the West as the arbitrage window remained open, they said.

This follows the export of up to 100,000 tons of 0.2 percent sulphur gas oil to the Mediterranean from Singapore over the weekend, traders said.

Gas oil's February crack over Dubai strengthened 50-60 cents from Friday to nearly $11 a barrel.

The market is also looking out for more import enquiries for low-sulphur gas oil from India, where most refiners could not meet the April 1 deadline to produce cleaner fuels.

Chilly temperatures would encourage Japanese players to seek more spot imports of jet-kerosene, against the backdrop of falling domestic stocks. Japan's kerosene stocks were last pegged at 4.14 million kilolitres in the week to Jan. 8.

"What's more, jet fuel cargoes from the Middle East are being pushed to the West," one trader said. "So there is less supply coming to Asia."

Singapore inventory levels, which fell to 10.692 million barrels (1.64 million tons) last week, could be either marginally higher or about the same, depending on when the cargoes reach the shore tanks.

Meanwhile, Asia's largest oil and gas producer, PetroChina Co. Ltd., yesterday said that its production rose 3.1 percent to a record high in 2004 as its gas output surged.

The growth was the highest annual rate since state-controlled PetroChina listed in 2000. The Beijing-based giant has intensified its exploration and development efforts to capitalize on a scorching rally in oil prices and is expected to seek similar growth in output this year.

PetroChina said in a statement it expects domestic demand for oil and gas to continue to grow in 2005 and it would focus on enhancing profitability.

China, the world's second-largest oil user after the United States, does not pump enough oil to meet demand that grew by 15 percent in 2004. *Reuters*

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From page B1

year.

Independent businessmen in Hong Kong, Turkey and Mexico followed with 54 percent.

Approaching the global average were the entrepreneurs from the developed markets of Japan, 51 percent; Russia, 51 percent, and South Africa, 50 percent.

While every country reported increased stress levels, those least affected were in Sweden with only 23 percent saying so; The Netherlands, 25 percent; and Canada, 26 percent.

Grant Thornton said 30 percent of business owners in Mexico said they were most likely to seek medical advice for stress while only 4 percent of those in Sweden said they would.

Benjamin Punongbayan, chair and chief executive of Punongbayan & Araullo, the local affiliate of Grant Thornton, said wherever one was doing business in the world, the strain is being felt much more this year.

"But if we scratch beneath the surface, business owners can feel stressed by success as much as by failure," Punongbayan added.

Grant Thornton said it plotted the stress results against the growth in sales that respondents experienced over the last three years, which showed five categories where different reasons caused stress:

- the "High Growth, High Stress Increase" countries with fast-expanding or emerging economies such as India, South Africa and Russia.. Business owners from this countries were stressed by increased competition and customer expectations.
- the "Low Growth, High Stress Increase" countries where sales growth has been slower than average and economies have been struggling, such as Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, Mexico and Turkey. Key contributors to their stress levels are increased competition, concern about the economy and pressure on cash flow and profits.
- the "High Growth, Low Stress Increase" countries like the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand have enjoyed a boom over the last three years. Business owners here seem to know how to cope with the success without becoming too stressed by it.
- the "Low Growth, Low Stress Increase" businesses that are in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Sweden. They have experienced low growth over recent years but do not let themselves get too stressed by it. Top in their list of stress factors were regulation and red tape.
- the "Average Growth, Average Stress Increase" countries which are in Europe. Business owners in this group have been doing pretty well, and are moderately stressed.

Still, two things were found to be universal: a third of respondents claimed they were stressed by not having enough leisure time and not having enough time to spend with friends and family.

Mr. Bearbull

From page B4

Hitting targets increases the basic salary and promotion is easily attainable. Unlike some call centers, which demand a bond (returnable only after working for a year), FH does not charge anything, yet has the lowest rate of attrition of any call center. The company has an academy and has signed up with many schools and universities, offering jobs to graduates provided their English is up to standard. FH has the highest acceptance rate in the business and many employees refer their friends and relatives. This is truly a people-oriented company.

By the end of March, there will be a rights issue, 1 for 2 at only P1, which will raise P300 million. Normally, a rights issue depresses the share price because stockholders cannot find the additional cash to take up the new shares. But in this case, the price is so low that it is practically a stock dividend. Everyone will want to buy new shares at P1 and this will increase liquidity by 50 percent. Of course, the price will be adjusted as well as the earnings per share and my target price. The apparently cheaper price might encourage investors to buy and will certainly please foreign brokers. While some large investors might take the opportunity to take a profit on their new shares, I think the number of new investors who will want to buy in at a lower price will offset this.

Throughout the article, I have done my calculations assuming that 20 percent of the seats will be non-revenue producing because they will be occupied by supervisors, trainees or vacant due to sickness. I have also not allowed for any benefit that the company will derive from the P300 million raised.

Next week I will feature the mining industry. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

China shares slide to 5-year low

SHANGHAI—China's shares slid to their lowest in more than five years on Monday morning after Huadian Power kicked off the country's first IPO in nearly five months, sparking fears future offers would divert cash from markets.

Investors generally shrugged off the death of Zhao Ziyang, the ex-party chief toppled during China's 1989 pro-democracy movement, though some analysts were waiting to gauge any potential political fallout.

Huadian Power International Corp. Ltd., China's third-largest independent electricity generator, expected to raise cash to bankroll a $245-million expansion, ending a freeze on initial public offerings that began in late August.

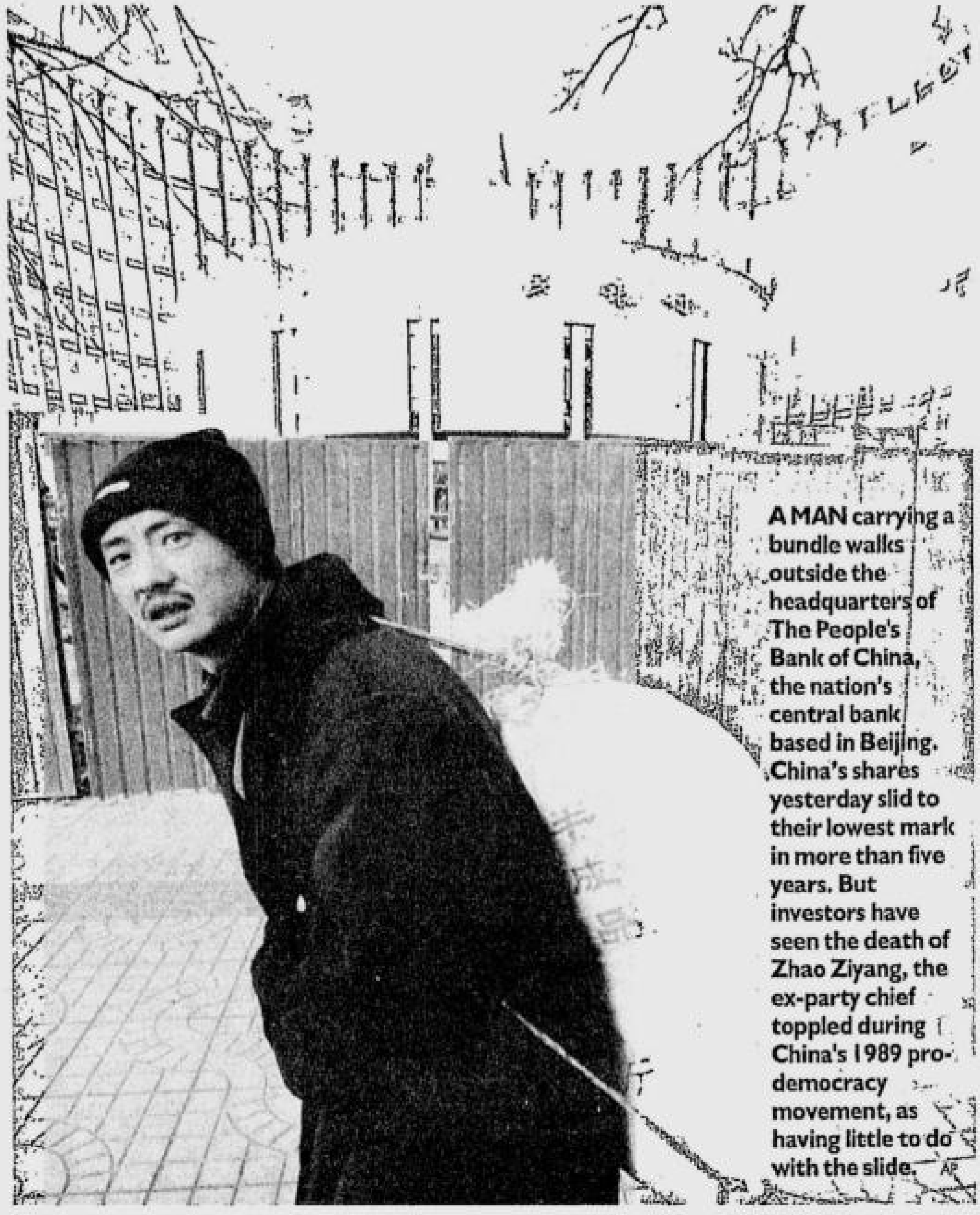
The benchmark Shanghai composite index had slumped 2.1 percent to 1,219.216 points at midday, its lowest since May 1999.

Investors dumped blue chips and electricity counters, preparing cash to buy into Huadian's IPO—the pricing of which would be determined via a Western-style book-building system that came into effect in 2005.

Regulators halted IPOs in August to ponder reforms to give minority shareholders a bigger say in the pricing of IPO stocks.

Asia's worst performing market in 2004 lost some 15 percent that year, pummeled by official economic-cooling steps, a slew of corporate scandals and a wealth of stock issues.

Reuters



A MAN carrying a bundle walks outside the headquarters of The People's Bank of China, the nation's central bank based in Beijing. China's shares yesterday slid to their lowest mark in more than five years. But investors have seen the death of Zhao Ziyang, the ex-party chief toppled during China's 1989 pro-democracy movement, as having little to do with the slide. AP

Asia stocks up; techs post gains

SINGAPORE—Asian stock markets rose on Monday, led by technology shares, and the yen held near its five-year highs versus the dollar as investor optimism about economic strength in Japan gathered steam.

Japan's Nikkei 225 average gained 0.71 percent in the morning session. Laptop computer and TV maker Toshiba Corp. rose 1.2 percent.

Asian shares outside of Japan, as measured by MSCI, had risen 0.8 percent by 0215 GMT.

Top Asian techs were supported by upbeat quarterly earnings from consumer electronics giant Samsung Electronics and a 1.8-percent surge on the Philadelphia Semiconductor Index on Friday.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. Ltd. gained 2.3 percent, in line with gains in its US share, and flat-screen maker AU Optronics Corp. rose 4.8 percent after bolting 7.5 percent higher in New York.

Samsung rose 3.3 percent.

Singapore trade was up 0.5 percent and Malaysia was a quarter of a percent stronger. Thailand rose 0.6 percent to a 9-month high and Indonesia rose half a percent to within sight of its Jan. 7 record high.

The yen held near a five-year high versus the dollar after European Central Bank (ECB) officials last week urged China to revalue its yuan currency.

The dollar was firm against other major currencies except the yen following strong US industrial production data.

Australia's stock market opened firmer, following a stronger lead on Wall Street, where the Dow Jones Industrial average gained 0.5 percent and the Nasdaq rose 0.8 percent.

Australia's benchmark S&P/ASX 200 was pegged at 0.3 percent.

Southcorp jumped 12 percent to A$4.76, coming off a trading halt after Foster's Group unveiled a A$2.5-billion ($1.9 billion) hostile bid for the top wine maker pitched at A$4.17 a share. Foster's shares slid 3.7 percent to A$5.44.

Taiwan's TAIEX gained 1 percent. Its technology sub-index rose 1.5 percent. The broader market got a boost from a deal on Saturday allowing direct charter flights between bitter rivals Taiwan and China over the Chinese New Year holidays.

Eva Airways rose 3.16 percent.

Japanese government bond (JGB) prices eased after US Treasuries snapped a four-day winning streak and the market digested last week's surprise jump in machinery orders data.

But analysts said further losses would probably be limited by strength in the yen.

Reuters

Chinese growth, inflation seen to ease anew

BEIJING—China's economy probably expanded at its slowest pace in more than a year in the 12 months to the fourth quarter as cooling measures dampened investment and inflation, easing the need for another rate increase.

Fourth-quarter gross domestic product was estimated 8.6 percent higher than a year earlier, according to a median forecast of six economists surveyed by Reuters last week.

That would be the slowest pace since the year through the second quarter of 2003, when GDP rose only 7.9 percent because of the outbreak of the SARS respiratory illness.

Official data for fourth-quarter GDP and other indicators for December due this month are expected to back expectations that the world's seventh-biggest economy is making a soft landing.

The National Bureau of Statistics did not specify the date of its quarterly news briefing, saying only it will take place after Thursday, Jan. 20.

Worried that superheated growth in industries such as steel and property could unbalance the economy, China has adopted a series of measures since 2003 to curb credit and investment.

The steps included a tougher approval process for industrial projects, higher reserve requirements for banks, and in October the first increase in lending interest rates in nine years.

"The tightening policy has shown some impact on real growth momentum," said Qu Hongbin, an economist with HSBC in Hong Kong. "Industrial activity and investment activity have shown some slowdown, but the growth momentum is still strong."

"What this means is credit policy and money supply policy will all be on the cautious side and kept tight to make sure that the slowdown will continue to a comfortable level," he added.

Data already out seem to have confirmed that China's economy is not headed for a sharp slowdown, which could ripple through other regional economies whose growth has relied on China robust buying of imported raw materials, machinery and components.

The broad money supply rose 14.6 percent in the year through December, an uptick from the 14.0 percent for the 12 months to November but well within the central bank's 2004 target of about 17 percent.

China's exports in December were nearly 33 percent higher than a year earlier, helping to create a record $11 billion monthly surplus and, analysts said, providing a cushion for the economy as investment growth continued its slide.

Growth in fixed-asset investment—spending on such things as roads, power plants and factories—is expected to have slowed to 22.6 percent in the year through December, the median forecast showed.

"Investment activity is still too strong, too high relative to the kind of comfortable or sustainable level of growth that policy makers want," Qu said.

Reuters

Markets eye US CPI, foreign exchange

LONDON—Markets will focus on US inflation data this week to gauge how aggressively the Federal Reserve will raise interest rates in the coming months while the dollar's recovery will also be a key talking point.

In the euro zone, investors will eye a breakdown of December inflation to see if the numbers support the European Central Bank's relaxed tone last week on prices, while November industrial production will show how that sector held up amid high oil prices late last year.

Foreign exchange will be a key area of concentration with the dollar's recent recovery facing a test in Tuesday's US capital flows figures, or TIC data.

"We think the numbers that are most crucial will be the data on the external trade situation and the financing of that trade situation. The TIC data is probably the most significant event risk now for the dollar," said Kamal Sharma, foreign exchange strategist at Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein. "The benchmark will be $60.3 billion, which was the trade deficit in November. Anything above that should be seen as a positive for the dollar."

Euro zone finance ministers meet at the start of the week and markets will listen for currency comments. ECB President Jean-Claude Trichet, who will be at the meeting, said on Friday that sharp euro rises were unwelcome and undesirable for growth.

Economists expect US December consumer prices on Wednesday to show a 0.1 percent monthly rise and core reading of 0.2 percent.

The Fed raised rates five times last year in quarter point increments, but some analysts wonder whether it would consider doing a half-point hike at some point.

"The focus (this) week should be on consumer prices in the US. This will be the trend-setter for (this) week, especially given that the Fed seems to be a bit worried about inflation risks in the US," said Alessandro Tentori, bond strategist at BNP Paribas.

"The question is when they are going to accelerate the hikes. The December Fed meeting minutes point in this direction in the sense that they see upside risks to inflation," Tentori added.

St. Louis Federal Reserve President William Poole told Reuters last Thursday US core inflation is well-contained but he reminded markets the Fed would not hesitate to depart from its pace of measured interest rate increases if necessary.

"The CPI numbers will be most important," said Sarah Hewin, senior economist at American Express Bank. "We have already had the flash estimate, so the interest will be on the core numbers."

Reuters

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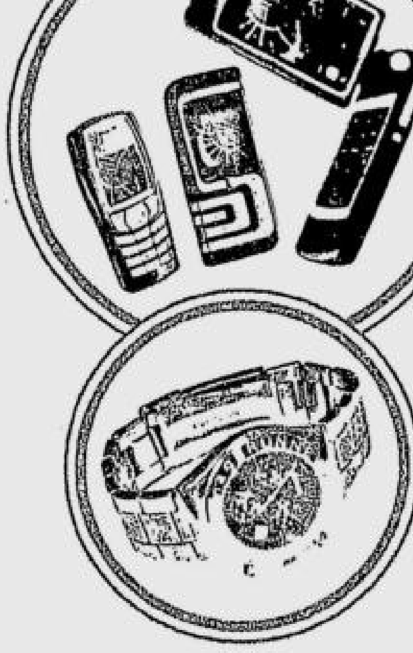

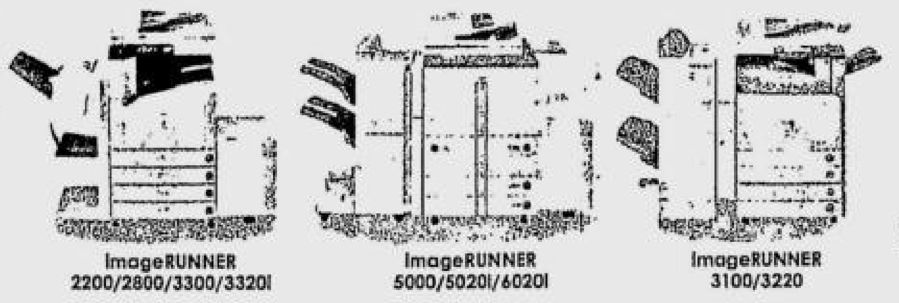

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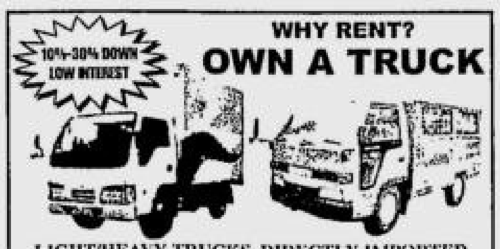

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- A Master's degree in economics, development, social sciences
- Five years experience in team and line management.
- Seven years experience on food and income security issues, with emphasis on market, value addition, income diversification and trade issues
- Experience in program development and management
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The post is open to all nationalities with a latest starting date of May 2005.

Interested candidates are encouraged to read the full job description at www.oxfamamerica.org click "About Oxfam" and then "Jobs at Oxfam".

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A request by email for the job description can also be sent to **eastasia@oxfamamerica.org.**

Please write in the subject heading "APPLICATION FOR FIS RPO".

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Department of Finance
INSURANCE COMMISSION
1071 United Nations Avenue, Manila

Head Office:
P.O. Box 3589 Manila
FAX No. 522-1434 / Tel. Nos. 523-8461 to 70

E-mail:
oic@i-manila.com.ph

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **ZENITH INSURANCE CORPORATION** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective November 11, 2004. Since then, no new and/ or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was placed under conservatorship on December 20, 2004 pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Transaction Advisory Services, Inc. with offices at 6760 Ayala Avenue, 1226 Makati City is the appointed Conservator.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Finance
INSURANCE COMMISSION
1071 United Nations Avenue, Manila

Head Office:
P.O. Box 3589 Manila
FAX No. 522-1434 / Tel. Nos. 523-8461 to 70

E-mail:
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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that the license issued by this Commission to ***MANTRUSTE INSURANCE CORPORATION*** to transact insurance business was recalled for cause on October 24, 2004. In view thereof, the company was ordered to cease and desist from taking new and/or renewal business of any kind or character or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was placed under conservatorship on December 22, 2004, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Mr. Salvador B. Depante was reappointed as Conservator on December 22, 2004, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended. His office is located at 21 Djakarta Street, BF Homes, Parañaque City.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **FIRST QUEZON CITY INSURANCE COMPANY, INC.** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective September 30, 2002. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner.

Atty. Beda G. Fajardo is the appointed Conservator since November 19, 2004, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended. His office is located at 7th Floor, Cityland Condominium 10, Tower 2 Ayala Avenue, Makati City.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **TIMES SURETY AND INSURANCE COMPANY, INC.** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective September 30, 2002. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was placed under conservatorship on December 23, 2004, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Transaction Advisory Services, Inc. with offices at 6760 Ayala Avenue, 1226 Makati City is the appointed Conservator.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **LUZON INSURANCE AND SURETY COMPANY, INC.** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective September 30, 2002. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was placed under conservatorship on December 22, 2004, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Mr. Alejandro B. Razote, with office address at No. 5 Kasoy Street, Verdant Acres Subd., Pamplona, Las Piñas City is the appointed Conservator.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **THE IMPERIAL INSURANCE, INC.** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective July 17, 2001. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was subsequently placed under receivership by then Insurance Commissioner Eduardo T. Malinis on September 24, 2001, pursuant to the provisions of Section 249 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Atty. Rommel A. Frias, with offices at 315 Pasda Mansion, 77 Panay Avenue corner Timog Avenue, Quezon City is the appointed Receiver.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **TICO INSURANCE COMPANY, INC.** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective November 22, 2000. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was placed under conservatorship on January 9, 2001, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended and subsequently placed under liquidation effective April 25, 2002 by then Commissioner Eduardo T. Malinis pursuant to the provisions of Section 249 of the Insurance Code, as amdended.

The appointed Liquidator is Atty. Rommel A. Frias with offices at 315 Pasda Mansion, 77 Panay Avenue corner Timog Avenue, Quezon City.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **FIRST INTEGRATED BONDING AND SURETY CO., INC.** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective September 5, 1990. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was placed under conservatorship on August 17, 1989, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Atty. Beda G. Fajardo is the appointed Conservator since October 14, 2004. His office is located at 7th Floor, Cityland Condominium 10, Tower 2 Ayala Avenue, Makati City.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that ***THE CAPITAL INSURANCE AND SURETY CO., INC.*** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective June 3, 2004. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was placed under conservatorship on December 16, 2004, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

R.S. Bernaldo & Associates, with offices at Unit 1810 Cityland Condominium 10 Towers I, 6815 H.V. dela Costa corner Ayala Avenue, Makati City is the appointed Conservator.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that ***WELLINGTON INSURANCE COMPANY, INC.*** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective March 1, 2004. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind of character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was subsequently placed under conservatorship by then Insurance Commissioner Eduardo T. Malinis on May 5, 2004 pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Atty. Rommel A. Frias, with offices at 315 Pasda Mansion, 77 Panay Avenue corner Timog Avenue, Quezon City is the appointed Conservator.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **DEVELOPMENT INSURANCE & SURETY CORPORATION** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective November 11, 2004. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The company was placed under conservatorship on December 10, 2004 pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Mr. Daniel A. Gomez, with offices at 702A Ritz Towers, 6745 Ayala Avenue, Makati City is the appointed Conservator.

(Sgd.) **BENJAMIN S. SANTOS**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - Jan. 18, 2005)

"Dalawang Mukha ng Ifugao" on Up Close....

UP CLOSE and Personal with Marissa Del Mar produced by Millicent Productions, Inc, has been successful in its format, an informative television program that features heart warming success stories of people and that has underscored the achievements of many celebrities in sports and entertainment industry, businessmen, politicians and government people and as well as the common Pinoy.

The show is aired every Tuesday, starting at 11 in the evening at IBC 13 and has gained mass acceptance for its engaging presentation. ...

Ang probinsiya ng Ifugao ay bantog dahil sa isa ito sa may pinakamagandang landscape sa buong mundo—ang Rice Terraces. Tinagurian itong one of the Wonders of the World at nabigyan pansin sa listahan ng World Heritage.

On the next episode of Up Close and Personal will feature a very intriguing public personality in the person of Congressman Solomon Chungalao.. Representative of the Lone District of Ifugao in an episode entitled "Dalawang Mukha ng Ifugao"(Two Faces of Ifugao)...why it is called so? Find out this coming Tuesday, January 18, over IBC 13 at 11 p.m.

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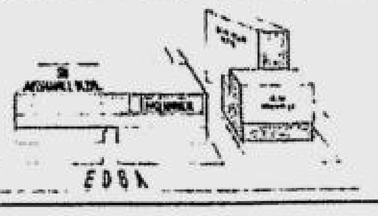

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Teresita Cojuangco Lopa

March 26, 1929 - January 16, 2005

Devoted wife of Ricardo A. Lopa (†); loving mother of Gina and Bong, Whitey and Marissa, Rocky and Marissa, Joel and Ito, Nine and Tony, Tinay, Jim and Tana, Rapa and Didi, and Jamike and Mayi; doting grandmother of Jamie, Camille, Miggy, Luis, Mariel, Steffi, Nica, Rich, Sandro, Snap, Mariana, Claudio, Jack, Ramon, Andrea, Felicia, Carlo, Lucas and Diego; caring sister of Pete and Sari, Josephine and Noring(†), Cory and Ninoy(†), Peping and Tingting, Passy and Esting; admirable sister-in-law of Lourdes and Pepot(†), Anita and Enteng, Nonoy(†) and Maitet, Norma(†) and Achie(†), Toti and Mely, Tessie and Mike(†), Tony and Cora, and Vic.

The wake is at #11 Palm Avenue, Forbes Park, Makati City.
Interment will be on Thursday, January 20 after the 9 a.m. Mass.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Pangarap Foundation, Inc.
will be appreciated.

Our Dearly Beloved

COL. JUANA C. RAÑADA

Ret. – PC; Decorated World War II Veteran
St. Lukes School of Nursing Alumnus – 1930

Now peacefully rests in the infinite grace & goodness of the Lord on the 10th day of January 2005 at the age of 96.

She is survived by her sister, Ignacia R. Cajigal; brother, Dr. Marcelino C. Rañada; daughter, Dr. Araceli R. Dantes and husband Dr. Pablito Dantes; nephews, nieces and grandchildren.

We request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Ave., Q.C. from Jan. 17 – 20, and at the AFP Medical Center Chapel, V. Luna Q.C. on Jan. 21, 2005. Necrological services will be held after the 5 p.m. Mass on Friday, Jan. 21, 2005.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 22, 2005 at the Libingan Ng Mga Bayani, Fort Bonifacio, Makati following the 8 a.m. Mass.

"Oh that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness."
Psalm 107:8

RAMON L. VISITACION

RV & Sons Shipyard
of Iloilo & New Manila, Quezon City

Peacefully joined our Lord and his beloved wife Priscilla Benedicto Visitacion at the age of 84 on January 16, 2005.

His loving children **Victoria & Atty. Charles Fabruada, José & Josefa, Antonia & Dr. Francis Mayuga, Engr. Jerome & Cecile, Regina**, his bereaved wife **Lilibeth**, grandchildren and great grandchildren request prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Loyola Memorial Park Viewing Chapel #4, Marikina City.

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Our Dearly Beloved

DY GO TIA

(HONORATA)

(Wife of the late **MR. IGNACIO DY HUN**)

Peacefully joined our Lord on January 14, 2005 at the age of 93.

Her younger sister **MILAGROS B. GO**; Her loving children **HENRY DY** (deceased) & wife **MARINA PABILONA DY**, **DR. JAMES G. DY** & wife **JULIETA G. DY, ESTEBAN G. DY** & wife **ANNA MARIE DY**, **FELIPE LEE** & wife **DIGNA LIM LEE** (deceased), **HUY LIAN DY-CHUNG** & husband **RAMON CHUNG** (deceased), **ANTONIO G. DY** (deceased) & wife **LOURDES DY, JACINTO G. DY** & wife **KO SIU TIN-DY**, **CRISTINA DY-CASACLANG** & husband **SERGIO CASACLANG**, **CATALINA DY-DE GUZMAN** & husband **REMEGIO DE GUZMAN**;

Grandchildren **AZUCENA DY-ONG** & husband **TEDDY ONG**, **JOSEPH DY** & wife **JULIE DY, IMELDA DY** & husband **WILLIAM CO** (deceased), **CHARLES DY** & wife **ANN MARIE DY**, **BERNARDINE LEE** & husband **AUGUST LEE**, **HARRY DY** & wife **TESSIE DY**, **JOHN DY** & wife **ELIZABETH DY**, **BELLA DY-TAN** & husband **JACK TAN**, **JAMESON G. DY** & wife **NENITA J. DY**, **HOWARD G. DY** & wife **ARCELI LIM-DY**, **JENNIFER DY-CO** & husband **ERICKSON CO**, **KATHLEEN DY-GO** & husband **GEORGE GO**, **SHARON DY-LAW** & husband **KERWIN LAW**, **SUSIE DY** & husband **HENRY CASACLANG**, **JOHNSON DY**, **GERRY DY** & wife **VILMA DY**, **STEVENSON DY** & wife **ROWENA DY, ALLYSON DY, AARON DY**, **GARY LEE** & wife **JENNIFER LEE**, **JANE LEE-LICLICAN** & husband **ALEX LICLICAN**, **ROBERT CHUNG** & wife **CYNTHIA V. CHUNG**, **ALBERT DY** & wife **BERNADETTE DY, EVELYN DY, ERIC DY, ARLENE DY, EDWIN DY**, **SANDRA VILLAMANCA** & husband **ALEXANDER VILLAMANCA**, **JACKSON DY** & wife **ANN JANETTE R. DY, MA. CRISTINA CASACLANG, MA. VICTORIA CASACLANG, JILL CASACLANG-VILLAMANCA** & husband **MICHAEL JOHN VILLAMANCA, SHERYL CASACLANG, KATHERINE KAY CASACLANG, MARY GRACE CHUA, KAREN DE GUZMAN** & **CAITLIN GAILLE DE GUZMAN**.

And great grandchildren, other relatives and friends request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul in the Kingdom of our Lord.

Her remains lie in state at LA FUNERARIA PAZ, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, January 19, 2005 at the Chinese Cemetery after the 7:00 a.m. committal service at La Funeraria Paz.

Atty. Eduardo M. Aquino

Peacefully joined our Creator on January 15, 2005 at the age of 85.

His bereaved wife Atty. Damasita M. Aquino; children **Alexander, Agnes, Eduardo Jr., Dan Victor, Susan**; children in-law **Edna, Dada, Ronald**; grandchildren and great grandchildren request readers to pray for his eternal repose and everlasting happiness.

His remains lie in state at the Sta. Maria della Strada Parish church, corner Katipunan Road and Pansol, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Thursday, January 20, 2005 at 9:00 a.m. after the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

"I am the resurrection and the life
He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies;
And whoever believes in Me will never die"

Lovingly Remembered
The 6th Death Anniversary

Jonathan Matthew Tee

Please say a prayer for the eternal repose of his soul
Linda, Jet-jet, Bernie and Charlotte

The Holy Mass will be offered today, January 18th at the following churches:

St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori Parish, Magallanes Village	6:15 am & 6:00 pm
Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills, San Juan	7:15 am & 6:15 pm
Mary the Queen Parish, Greenhills, San Juan	11:00 am & 7:00 pm
St. Francis of Assisi Parish Church, Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong	7:00 am & 6:00 pm
Redemptorist Church, Baclaran	6:45 am & 5:30 pm

In Memory of

Luz Jacildo-Sanchez

*the **Philippine Marketing Association***

joins her bereaved family, relatives and friends in praying for the eternal repose of her soul.

She is survived by her children **DODO & TAL SORIANO, BEBE & ERNESTO MAGHARI, PECHAY & JOE BARTOLOME, TOTO BOIE & NIMFA PACULAN, GIGI STAR, PAM & JOEL ADRIANO**, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Her remains lie in state at ALISBO Memorial Chapel, Mandalagan, Bacolod City.

Interment will be on Sunday, January 23, 2005.

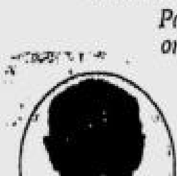
"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
— 2 Corinthians 5:8

"Let the words of my mouth meet your Favor, keep the thoughts of my heart before you, Lord, my rock, my redeemer..."
— Psalm 21:15

PABLO C. CABADING

Former Councilor, San Fernando La Union

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on January 15, 2005 at the age of 78.



His bereaved wife **ELSIE**; children **Joy & Beth, Ella & Arman, Marivic & Noli, Beda & Ivy, Magie & Henry, Jojo & Rica, Mary Jean & Dong**; grandchildren, relatives and friends request the readers to to join them in praying for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His body lies at #121 Matahimik St., Tawiran Extension, Santolan, Pasig City and will be transferred to Joces Chapel, Biday, City of San Fernando, La Union on Thursday (January 20).

Interment will be on January 23, 2005 (Sunday) at Lingsat Cemetery, City of San Fernando, La Union at 2:00 p.m. after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at St. William Cathedral, CSF, La Union.

"There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens..." Ecclesiastes 3:11

JUDGE RENO R. GONZALES, SR. (Ret.)

Regional Trial Court-Iriga City, Branch 35

Peacefully joined our Lord on Sunday, January 16, 2005, at the age of 73.

His beloved wife **Lourdes Regalado-Gonzales**; children **Rene & Gilda, Ma. Rowena, Sarina Rosa & Joey, Rey & Alexia, Reno Jr. & Lou, Valdemar & Elsa** and **Tinalou**; grandchildren **Regilyn, Paul Nichol, Ysabelle & John Vincent; Eileen Rose, Joseph Jonathan & Christine Joy; Ryan Vincent, Jan Mylo, Yasha Mae & Abygail Lucille; Lorenzo Gabriel; Timothy, Raymond Val, Marvin & Charles Steven**, request fervent prayers and special petitions for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Funeraria Imperial, Peñafrancia Avenue, Naga City.

Interment will be at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, January 21, 2005 at Sto. Niño Memorial Park, Basilica Road, Naga City.

BUSINESS

Neda expects economy to grow by 6.3% in 2005

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority has projected that the country's economy will grow by 6.3 percent in 2005, as infrastructure projects slated for this year are seen to boost construction and as the business process outsourcing industry continues to post exponential growth.

"For 2005, our assessment is that the economy (as measured by the gross domestic product) will still be able to grow within the MTPDP (Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan) target of 5.3 to 6.3 percent with a likelihood of meeting the high-end target once major public infrastructure projects commence," Neda Director General Romulo Neri said in a press briefing yesterday.

Neri, who is also the country's economic planning secretary, said the infrastructure projects lined up for the year included the Northrail, the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Road, the South Luzon Expressway rehabilitation, the Subic Port, and airports of Iloilo, Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro. The Neda earlier estimated that about P80 billion would be invested for these projects.

Citing estimates by the Department of Trade and Industry, Neda said there would be 80,000 more jobs to be created by the call center industry, as seats are expected to increase to 40,000 from only 35,000 last year.

Neda said the industry sector, to be largely boosted by the construction sector, would likely grow by 7.1 percent this year, or much higher than the MTPDP target of only 5.4 to 6.4 percent.

The services sector, to be led by the BPO (business process outsourcing) industry, is expected to post a 6.6-percent growth, or the high-end of the 5.7 to 6.6 percent growth target in the MTPDP.

For its part, the agriculture sector is estimated to grow by 4.2 percent, or the low-end of the 4.2 to 5.2 MTPDP target, as the El Niño weather phenomenon is expected to take its toll on production, although the effects will be subtler than what were experienced the previous years.

The projected growth for the agriculture sector is also lower than the 5.1-percent growth it posted in 2004.

The government would continue to provide support services to increase productivity, such as the distribution of high-yield variety and certified seeds in rice and corn, the distribution of bio-agents to control infestation, and a subsidy program to lessen the cost of fertilizer to farmers, Neda said in a statement.

Neri said consumers should get a slight reprieve from rising prices as inflation was expected to begin tapering off. He said inflation was likely to hit 5 percent by December, or much lower than the 8.6 percent recorded in the same month of 2004 (using 2000 as the base year).

"The challenge for us is to make more people feel the economic growth. But for people to eventually feel it, we have to have a continuous growth, not just a one-year growth of 6 percent," he said.

Neri said the reason more people said they experienced hunger in the past months, as cited by a survey by the Social Weather Stations, was due to the effects of inflation.

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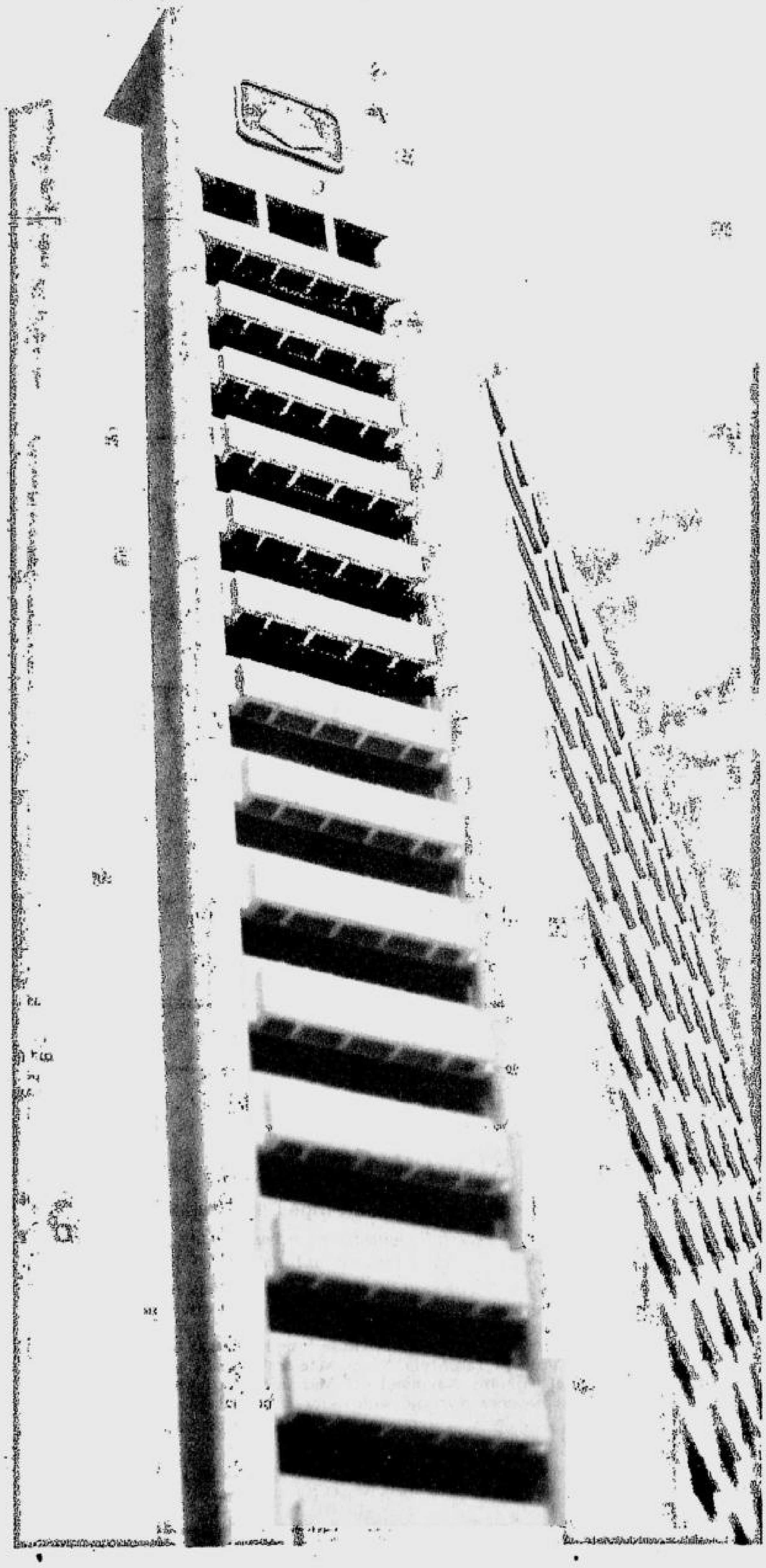

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Negros-Panay power link deferred

By Abigail L. Ho

BUDGETARY constraints and other financial considerations has forced National Transmission Corp. (Transco) to delay by a year the implementation of the Negros-Panay component of its P4.4-billion Cebu-Negros-Panay (CNP) interconnection project.

A source privy to the matter said the Department of Energy had recommended that construction of the Negros-Panay line be shelved for a year, taking into consideration Transco's limited capital expenditure budget as well as the viability of constructing the line.

Pre-construction activities, however, like right-of-way acquisitions, could already be conducted in preparation for actual construction, the source said.

The CNP line was supposed to be completed by the end of this year.

The source said a consultant of the Energy Regulatory Commission had even recommended for a three-year delay of the project's implementation, which the DOE did not accept.

"(The consultants) were looking if we could slide (the project's implementation) for another three years due to its economic viability. The way we see it, they looked at the financial aspect and not the technical aspect of the project," the source said.

As transmission lines could not be bought on the shelf and installed just like that, the source said it should take about one and a half years to complete the project, once approved for implementation.

While the CNP interconnection and uprating project was vital to assuring the Visayas grid of a stable and secure electricity supply, the source said having its Negros-Panay component shelved for another year was not expected to have a very adverse effect on the current Visayas power situation.

"If we can finish the Leyte-Cebu (interconnection), that will mean an additional 200 megawatts (MW), some of which you can transmit to Negros and even to Panay," the source said.

"Although there is already a submarine cable connecting Negros and Panay, what we're looking at is the reliability of the system, supposing something happens to the submarine cable. There will be no back-up (line)," he explained.

PAL, CebuPac get Nagoya flights

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE Airlines and Cebu Air Pacific are launching flights to Nagoya starting March this year following a Civil Aeronautics Board decision to allow both carriers to mount four trips weekly to one of Japan's major cities.

Japan is an important destination to the local airlines because it is the second largest source of foreign arrivals next to the United States. Nagoya is a city near Tokyo where many Filipinos work.

PAL said it would start flying to Nagoya on March 1 while Cebu Pacific said it would start trips to Nagoya and Osaka, also in Japan, by the second quarter, upon the arrival of its two brand-new Airbus planes it is set to lease.

Of the seven weekly entitlements or flights to Nagoya allotted by the Japanese government to the Philippines during last year's air talks, four went to Cebu Pacific and three to PAL.

Of the seven "strictly Osaka" flights, three would go to the Gokongwei carrier and two would go to PAL. The CAB granted one Osaka coefficient each to cargo carriers Asia Overnight Express Cargo and Lucio Tan's Pacific East Asia Corp.

Of the 14 new coefficients, 7 went to Cebu Pacific and 5 to PAL.

Aviation officials said PAL is going to convert to Nagoya flights idle entitlements to other destinations from previous air service agreements with Japan that would allow the flag carrier to mount the same number of flights as the Gokongwei-owned low-cost airline.

Nagoya is opening its new international airport in February.

LOSE weight the natural way /C4

LIFESTYLE

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Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD** ● FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

Set realistic exercise goals

Part I

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

THE BENEFITS of exercise are not evident right away so many people stop working out before they really discover what exercise can do for them. If exercise delivered instant gratification like a massage or getting your hair done, maybe there wouldn't be so many dropouts.

It doesn't help either that fitness infomercials make false promises like "flat abs in just three minutes a day." Yeah, right! No wonder people quit exercising prematurely. They have unrealistic expectations.

Someone once said disappointments were due to unfulfilled expectations. If people knew what to expect realistically when they exercised, maybe they wouldn't be so disappointed and they would stick to their programs until they reaped the true benefits of being in shape.

No miracles

The problem is people expect miracles. Sometimes they want to look like someone with a totally different body type. Or they envy someone who is 20 years younger. Or, if their goal is achievable, they don't realize the price they have to pay for it.

I remember a male client who wondered why he didn't have washboard abs in spite of exercising regularly for a few years. When I explained to him what body builders go through to achieve that type of muscular definition, he figured his life wouldn't be fun anymore. He decided to be satisfied with what he got, which was quite fit by average standards.

Don't focus only on appearance.

Majority of people who start exercising do so to improve their appearance. Nothing wrong with that. But if you focus on the other benefits of exercise, you will be more motivated even if you have not yet achieved the appearance you want.

Good things start to happen inside your body when you exercise. These are physiological changes like a lowered resting heart rate (meaning your heart gets stronger), more mitochondria (the part of your cells that produces energy), better blood pressure, improved blood sugar levels and increased sensitivity to insulin (a good thing if you are diabetic).

You can easily keep track of your heart rate, blood pressure and blood chemistry so you can "see" the results of your exercise.

Performance-based results are much easier to monitor and can be quite motivating. Take note of how many minutes and at what intensity you do your aerobic exercise when you start to work out and again after six weeks. You will be surprised at how much you can improve, especially if you have been sedentary for a long time.

Find out the difference in the amount of weight you can lift, how flexible you have become or how many abdominal crunches you can do. Even an improvement in coordination is something to celebrate.

You may not be able to measure objectively mental and psychological results but you can "feel" them. Are you sleeping better? Are you more relaxed and cheerful since you started exercising? Are you more alert? These are just some of the simple but profound benefits of exercise.

You lose more in inches than in pounds.

If you are exercising mainly to lose weight—doing any type of resistance exercise (dumbbells, barbells, machines, rubber bands, and body weight exercises like yoga and Pilates)—you need to realize that it is normal to lose more in inches but not so much in pounds.

Muscles get heavier and denser while fat cells shrink. Don't feel bad if this happens. This is a wonderful sign that your body composition is changing and you are becoming leaner.

So don't lose sleep that the scale doesn't seem to show any changes. Who cares as long as your clothes are getting looser and you have fewer bulges? It is very possible to drop a few sizes but not change your weight or even gain a few pounds (of muscle, of course!).

Strength may come before muscle growth.

If you are a man trying to get bigger muscles, it is normal to have a marked improvement in strength (the amount of weight you can carry) but a small improvement in muscle size. The muscles may not start growing until after a few weeks or a few months.

The reason you are getting stronger without getting bigger is because muscle fibers that have never been stimulated before are "waking up." This is temporary. If you have a solid muscle-building program (including proper nutrition and rest), your muscles will eventually reach their genetic size potential.

Stages of improvement

The first four to six weeks are called the "initial conditioning stage." This doesn't mean you won't see results but just don't expect to see a flabby behind turn into "buns of steel" or expect a big drop in body weight.

This is exactly the problem. Many people are focused only on appearance instead of the other kinds of results, which are just as important if not even more important.

In general, you should see a small improvement in four to six weeks and a bigger improvement within three to six months. This is assuming, of course, that you are doing at least three sessions a week, you are exercising at the highest intensity that you can safely do, you are doing the right exercise for your goals (don't expect hard firm upper body muscles if all you do is ride a bicycle), and you are eating the right amount of calories.

Note: Exercise of the week is on page C4.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info.

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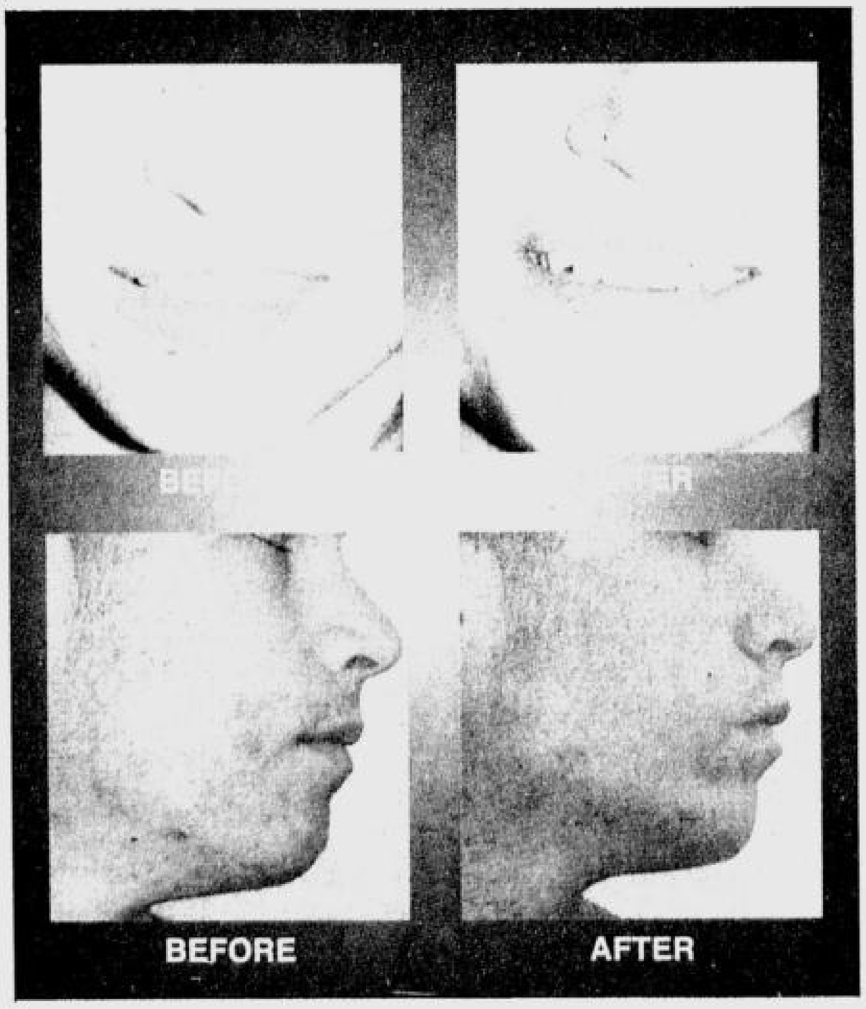
The End To Your Acne Problems
WITHOUT THE PILLS, PAIN OR PRICKING



Acne is a social drawback for people who suffer from it, women especially. It makes them feel self-conscious and insecure about their appearance. Even the best makeup in the world cannot hide unsightly, bumpy pimples. But now, people need not suffer any longer because there is already an easy and effective solution.

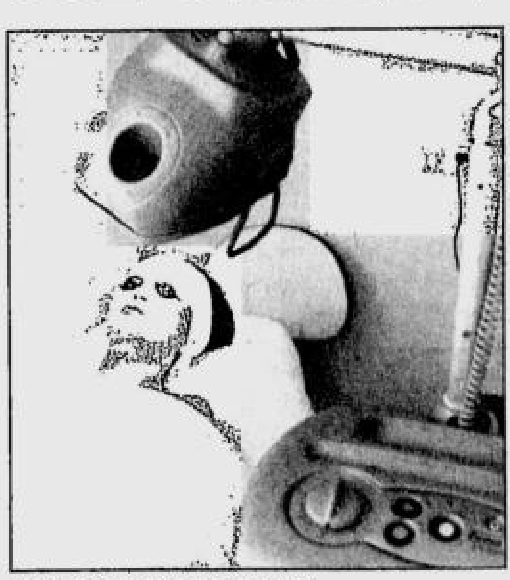
Facial Care Centre, the leading skincare professionals who have pioneered technological breakthroughs to help you achieve that much-coveted beautiful-looking skin, now introduces **LightCure Acne Therapy** – the new anti-acne treatment that brings fast, safe relief to pimple-prone skin minus the pills, pain and pricking.

FDA-approved, LightCure Acne Therapy is scientifically proven to treat acne 3x faster than other methods. While old, traditional acne methods require painful injections or oral & topical medications to diminish acne formation, LightCure carefully selects the most accurate and effective wavelength of UV-free light for acne treatment. Safe, hygienic and effective for all skin types, it decreases skin inflammation and has a long-lasting preventive effect without pigmentary changes and scarring.

Here's how it works: when p.acnes (propionibacterium acnes) bacteria proliferates, it causes infection and inflammation of acne lesions. LightCure covers the entire face with a bright pure lilac light, which penetrates the skin safely and accurately, and selectively destroys p. acnes bacteria without causing harm to surrounding tissues. This will result to a decrease in inflammation and p.acnes bacteria – thus, a clearer, smoother face.

LightCure clearly makes the difference. Within only a month of treatment, it brings dramatic improvement to pimple-ridden or acne-tormented skin, without aftereffects. The treatment is simple, painless and has been proven very effective. Clients can sit or lie comfortably and listen to relaxing music, while undergoing treatment. It is endorsed and used by leading skin care clinics across five continents, demonstrating long-lasting success. LightCure has gained worldwide recognition and has become one of the most favorite beauty secrets of celebrities and models in the international scene.

LightCure is indeed the most advanced anti-acne treatment available today. So, if you are tired of seeing pimples on your face after trying old, ineffective methods, inquire with the Facial Care Centre professionals now about their LightCure Acne Therapy. Call **892-SKIN** (7546).



LightCure Treatment at Facial Care Centre

WE ARE FAMILY. The eye-catching Concepcion cousins—Vina Monasterio, Liza Santos, Rica Araneta and Michelle Reyes

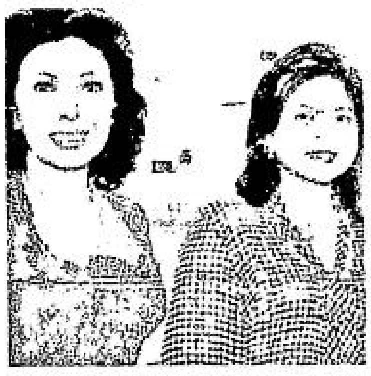
SANDWICHED. Metro Society's Raul Manzano with beauties Maricris Zobel and Carol Garcia

HIP MOVERS. Miguel Rosales, Pepper Teehankee, Jenni Epperson and Angelique Villaraza of L'Oreal

Filipinos are introduced to modern 'art of haircare'

YOUNG women of substance: Karen Santos and Maricris Floirendo Brias

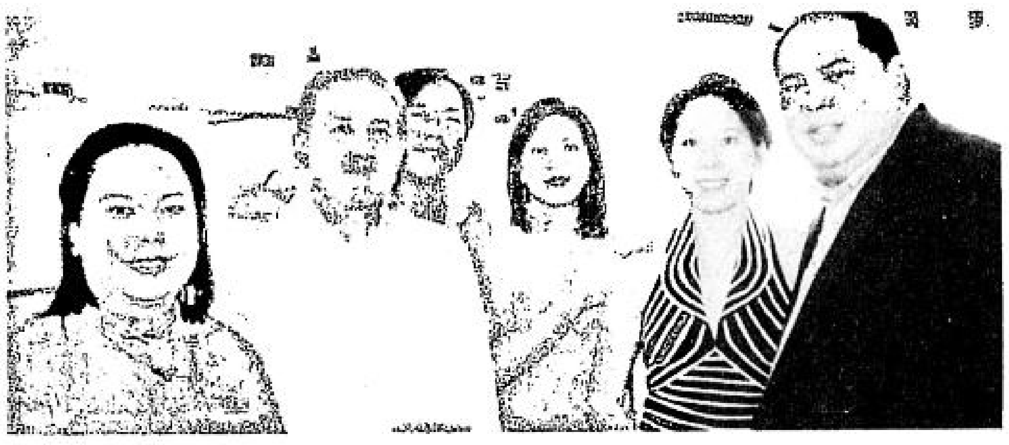
SOCIETY GALS. Menchu Concepcion and Marivic Araneta Concepcion


WOMEN on the move. Charina Zaragoza and Melissa Martel

VINA Mercado and Tunting Cruz-Matters

KERASTASE FOLLOWERS. Paing and Mely Hechanova, Renna and Ed Angeles, with Conrad Onglao

SUPER PALS. Carla Tengco, Sigalit Djemal and Kathy de Guzman


TOP ACHIEVER Riana Trajano, Nissan's Nick Locsin, architect Onglao, renowned gourmet Lucille Locsin, and Southern belle Gina L. Gabaldon and her husband, businessman Raffy Hechanova

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** on **Kodak Max**

DOESN'T the word kerastase sound very exotic? It's actually "the art of hair beauty," which is now practiced in 45 countries. We can now count the Philippines, *palanggas*, as one of the places where this art of haircare, backed up by the world famous L'Oreal advanced research, can be experienced by both men and women.

The Kerastase Institute by Salon ESA (the initials of **Edgardo S. Angeles**) is owned by that popular couple of Manille society, young business achiever Ed Angeles and his wife, **Renna Hechanova**. Opened a couple of sleeps ago at the posh 6750 Ayala, it offers the latest and personalized hair and scalp treatments in an awesome ambience. The place combines high technology, luxury and relaxation, as designed by popular architect **Conrad Onglao**, *palanggas*.

As we breezed in, we immediately felt cool. With the color white predominant all throughout the whole area, it was like a breath of fresh air. There was no trace of impersonality or coldness.

Consultants, we found out, create a personalized Kerastase ritual for every client and recommends a specific home care program for head, back and shoulder massage.

Clients get other services by Salon ESA, like hair color, cut and blow dry, and nail care, in an auxiliary salon.

Hey, it was one of those high-society super well-attended launchings where everyone from our town's cream of the creamiest set was in full attendance.

Guests included hot and hip namedroppables like **Maricris Floirendo Brias; Karen Santos;** Metro Society's man for all seasons **Raul Manzano; Conchita vda. de Toda;** elusive eligible bachelor **Anton Roxas; Chuchu** and **Mandy Eduque;** gorgeous **Maricris Zobel; Bak** and **Mitto Licauco; Ysa Suntay;** fun couple **Gaby** and **Mara Oledan; Camille Samson; Maita Bayot; Libet Cu-Unjieng Virata;** and the Bank of the Philippine Island's hot young president **Gigi Montinola**, plus so many others too awesome to mention.

Best-dressed women of substance were **Sigalit Djemal**, glam gal **Doody Tuason, Bella Madrigal Vazquez, Carol Garcia, Teresa Fernandez, Jeannie Goulbourn** and **Frances Lim.**

Needless to say, those fashionable Concepcion aunts were all *très* visible. You couldn't miss **Marivic Araneta C.; Menchu** and **Susan Concepcion. Renna Angeles'** cousins **Vina, Liza, Michelle, Rica** and **Jimmy** led the pack of well-wishers for this super attended occasion.

Naturellement, Renna's popular, well-respected parents, the Rotary International Club's pride, Southern gentleman **Paing Hechanova**, and his wife **Mely Concepcion**, were with their heirs **Raffy, Raissa** and **Rianna.**

Ed A.'s dad, Dr. **Gil Angeles**, and his sister, **Ces Fornier**, with her children, were all accounted for, *palanggas*.

A TOAST to life. Czech Republic Ambassador Stanislav Slavicky, Dr. Gustav Jamnig and philanthropist Rose Marie "Baby" Arenas

OPERA LOVERS. Charlie Valencia, Cecille Mitra and Sayaw Foundation's special events chair, fashionable former Guimaras Gov. Emily Lopez; (standing) Inday del Rosario and soon-to-be ambassador to Austria, Alberto Lopez

INTERNATIONAL businessman Renato Enriquez, Rustan's brilliant Marites Tantoco and her father, Ambassador Bienvenido R. Tantoco

Mozart goes to a bar

Sayaw Foundation in cooperation with Mandarin Oriental, Manila, Smart Communications, Qatar Airways and Lifestyle Network, had a very successful staging recently of the brilliant compositions of **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** and the widely acclaimed opera in four acts, "The Marriage of Figaro," at the Captain's Bar.

Eight top opera artists from Austria, supported by select members of the University of Santo Tomas Conservatory of Music, performed with musical artistry under the direction of renowned Austrian impresario and musical director, **Franz Langer.**

Enjoying this grandiose adaptation of Mozart's opera were Mandarin Oriental Manila's general manager **Helmut Gaisberger**, together with vivacious wife **Vina Gonzalez Gaisberger;** Austrian Ambassador **Christian Krepela;** Czech Republic's Ambassador **Stanislav Slavicky;** Belgian Ambassador **Christian** and Madame **Gul Tanghe;** and Netherlands' Ambassador **Robert Vornis.**

Sayaw Foundation was represented by president, **Yaying Dragon**, with husband, business magnate and former Rep. **Rene Dragon;** first vice president **Solita Tan-Gatue**, second vice president **Carina Lebron**, director and membership committee member **Chacah Camacho**, and director and Ways and Means Committee member, exotic beauty **May Neri.**

OPEN SESAME. Snipping the ribbon are Asia Zone Marketing head of L'Oreal Paris Nicholas Krafft, Mely Hechanova and Jenny Ng

FORMER Rep. Rene Dragon with Madame Nicole Vornis

Also there were Austrian Trade Commission's Dr. **Wolfgang** and **Huda Harwalik;** British Embassy's deputy head, **Robert Fitchett;** Father Pio Foundation's best-dressed lady; **Rose Marie "Baby" Arenas;** top artist **J. Sanso**, with **Larry** and **Dee Marquez Litchfield; Cecille Mitra;** Asian Development Bank executives **Richard** and **Susan Vokes** , together with **David** and **Corinne Fraser;** writer and artist **Linda Panlilio;** Makati Medical Center's well-known plastic surgeon Dr. **Jorge Neri;** Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' **Grace Villanueva;** Rep. **Cynthia Villar;** Bukidnon's famous couple, Gov. **Joe Zubiri** and his ultra-glam wife, **Vicky Fernandez; Caferino** and **Juliana Benedicto; Chito** and **Anna Sobrepeña.**

"The overwhelming success of the recent staging of Mozart's brilliant opera was a rallying call [for] support for the development of the Filipino dance artist, to which the (Sayaw) foundation is dedicated—to provide support, cultivate and develop the talent and skills of Filipino ballet and dance performers throughout the country," it was beautifully explained to us by Sayaw Foundation's president, tall, elegant Yaying Dragon, no less.

PERSONAS who care (standing): Sayaw Foundation's president, tall, elegant Yaying Dragon; Belgian Ambassador Christian Tanghe and his wife Gul Tanghe; and Sayaw Foundation's first vice president and treasurer Sol Tan-Gatue; (seated) Sayaw Foundation members, socialite Carina Lebron, Beth Valera and Nini Layug

Can you get hurt during astral travel?

Part II

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

TO CONTINUE my response to Sharmaine Galve's interesting questions: This is the first time I've come across an experience like yours during astral projection or sleep paralysis. But let me tell you that when we are in the astral plane, we experience many strange, sometimes scary things.

The astral world has many denizens or inhabitants. Some of them are monstrous looking, others angelic and beautiful. It depends on which level you land in the astral world.

A person can be in the astral plane without knowing he/she is there. It may seem to the person that he/she is simply dreaming, yet the experience is so realistic it is usually regarded as more than a dream.

I believe sleep paralysis happens precisely because the astral body is out of the physical body. So there is a connection. Same with hearing and seeing things one doesn't normally see in the waking state. It would indicate one is out of his/her body.

I believe *bangungot* happens when one goes into the lower astral plane, which some call the "phantasmagoric plane," where monstrous creatures and negative lower spirits snatch or catch those who stray into their path.

That's why some people don't come back. They get caught in the vortex of negative energy in that plane. *Bangungot* is not always due to "acute pancreatitis," the accepted medical explanation for it.

Ordinary sleep paralysis is never fatal. It is a very natural state and one can always go back to his/her physical body if he/she does not panic or struggle to get back. It is when one goes to the lower astral plane that some dangers arise.

This happens when we sleep with negative emotions, or fear, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. These things can bring you to the lower astral planes. It is only in the lower planes where astral projection can be dangerous. Otherwise, there's no reason to worry.

As for the silver cord that connects the astral body to the physical body, it will never be broken unless it is time for the individual to die. It cannot be physically cut or severed because it is made of astral or energy substance which is non-physical. It can be extended indefinitely even into outer space.

We don't always project our astral body out of the physical when we sleep. But whenever we sleep, our astral body is only slightly detached. That's why we can sleep. When it completely detaches from the physical, that's the time we say we are on astral projection or OOBE (out-of-body experience).

Painful encounters

Here's another strange experience of astral projection, this time from a man who was my former student when I was still teaching the Silva Method of Mind Control.

"You said in your article you've never heard of anyone getting hurt in an OOBE. Well, here's my story," said reader Ray Concepcion.

He related that he tried going out of his body while drunk. "I lay back in the dark, then visualized myself exiting my physical body. I'm not sure when I fell asleep, but I suddenly felt a shift (with a sensation of cupping your hands to your ears), then found myself alone in a relative's backyard with the night suffused with a strange light." Beside him was a large black dog that he assumed was his guardian.

Though OOBE encounters may be scary and painful sometimes, so far no permanent damage has been reported

While out of his body, the sky suddenly went black, as if something gigantic descended on him and the dog. There was also the sensation of thousands of jostling little bats around them.

"I heard my guardian snarling as if it was having a violent struggle with something large in the dark. Suddenly, I felt a large claw envelop my body and I was lifted face up in the impenetrable dark. I felt the claw groping into my left side and incredible pain from the repeated gouging went through my body. My arms were pinned to my sides but I tried to grab at something and my hand caught a hairless leg which struggled to escape from me. As the pain increased, I woke up."

Years later a clairvoyant friend of his dad said he saw a giant bat looking over the wall at the back of their house. Ray's room was at the back of the house.

On another occasion, as he lay exhausted, he had another OOBE. This time there was no sign of his guardian. The same type of darkness descended on him.

"This time, something with teeth clamped down on my thigh. I couldn't move due to a strange paralysis, but I mustered enough strength to raise my left hand and to strike downward."

He woke up just as his hand went down and hit something.

Yes, I know that such scary and sometimes painful encounters happen during OOBE, but what I really said in my article was that, from what I knew, no permanent harm had ever been reported by people who experienced sleep paralysis.

My theory on what happened to you is that you went to the lower astral planes and some negative spirits tried to grab or snatch your astral body. That's why it is a good practice to pray and to have a positive mental attitude before going to sleep.

International marathon for Pasig Feb. 27

CLEAN and Green Foundation, chaired by former First Lady Amelita "Ming" Ramos, is holding the First International Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River on Feb. 27.

An offshoot of the Pasig River Heritage Marathon, the international race will subsequently be held every last Sunday of February. The marathon will start at Fort Santiago in Intramuros and end in Fort Bonifacio's Global City.

The 4-year-old Pasig River Heritage Marathon was accredited by the United States-based Association of International Marathons and Road Races (AIMS) and the International Association of Athletic Foundations (IAAF), to make it an official international event.

Now included in the official list and schedule of marathons in the world, The Philippine Marathon for the Pasig River seeks to draw attention to the plight of the river. It will pass 11 of the 13 bridges that cross the Pasig.

Since the first marathon, the race has been a showcase of physical prowess as well as an opportunity for environmental advocacy and the raising of historical and cultural awareness.

One of its more immediate aims is to bring back aesthetic life along Pasig River. A long-term goal is to bring back aquatic life in Pasig not later than the year 2014. The 42-kilometer run is sanctioned by the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association (Patafa), in close collaboration with the Intramuros Administration, Fort Bonifacio Development Corporation, Caritas Manila and other government and private sector partners. The annual event is in support of the work of the government's Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission. Call 5276376.

Course on clinical problem-solving, Feb. 9-11

PHYSICIANS and paramedical personnel are invited to the 27th post-graduate course, "Clinical Problem Solving: Putting Principles into Practice," Feb. 9-11, of the University of Santo Tomas Department of Medicine.

Top clinicians and medical experts at the university's Thomas Aquinas Research Center on España, Manila, will present comprehensive approaches to common medical conditions based on updated international and local guidelines.

Topics include ways of dealing with patients with bleeding disorders and breast mass, biological treatment options for patients with rheumatic disorders, updates on urinary tract infection and community-acquired pneumonia in immunocompetent adults, and guidelines on tuberculosis and updates on obstructive lung diseases.

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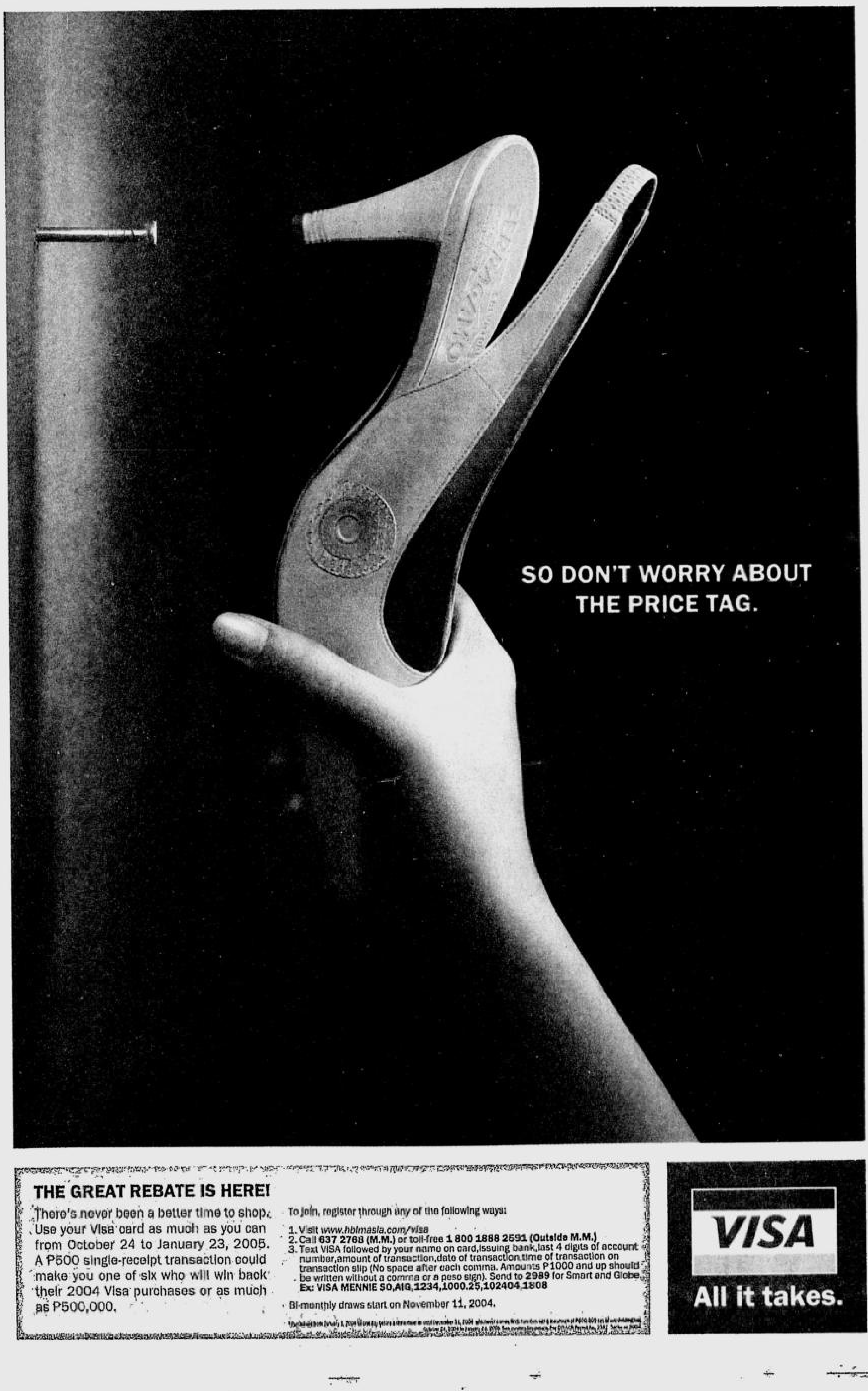

THE GREAT REBATE IS HERE!

There's never been a better time to shop. Use your Visa card as much as you can from October 24 to January 23, 2005. A P500 single-receipt transaction could make you one of six who will win back their 2004 Visa purchases or as much as P500,000.

To join, register through any of the following ways:

1. Visit www.hblmasia.com/visa
2. Call 637 2768 (M.M.) or toll-free 1 800 1888 2591 (Outside M.M.)
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Bi-monthly draws start on November 11, 2004.

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Don't fall for hard-sell advertising and fantastic claims; some weight loss products may be dangerous

DANCE MACHINE

ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

Natural ways to slim down

THE PERENNIAL question is: "How can I lose weight and keep those pounds away?"

It is easy for people who burn calories fast to eat all day and never gain weight, but the majority often say in frustration: "I look at food and gain weight instantly."

Many programs have been designed to help people achieve their weight goals. A few herbal-natural methods can also help.

Speed up your metabolism

Remember that as you get older, your metabolism slows down. This is an inescapable biological fact.

- Increase your physical activity. Take up a sport, do your own housework, walk briskly daily, enroll in a gym (join a group dance workout). If weight-training does not appeal to you, sign up for dance classes. Fitness First conducts hip-hop classes for burning and flexibility.
- Include thermogenic herbs, plants that raise your body's heat levels, in your regimen—three times a day with your meals. You will feel their effects within minutes. Try the following:

Cayenne (Capsicum Minima). This mouth-burning red pepper makes you sweat—tablet: 250 mg; powdered cayenne pepper: ¼ tsp mixed with a glass of water.

Ginger. This body warmer makes a wonderful after-meal tea—fresh root: 1 tsp, grated, mixed in boiling water. Strain before drinking.

Fill up before meals

Outsmart your tummy. When trained, the tummy can adjust to having smaller portions. Instead of three big meals, try five small meals. Load up on fiber before meals. Among the tummy fillers you may consider is psyllium seed that swells when mixed with water.

Have some C-lium fiber (available in Mercury Drug) 30 minutes before a meal.

- Take whole flaxseed (the seed of the flax plant and available in health food stores) half an hour before a meal. Drink at least eight glasses of water every day to prevent constipation.

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

Exercise mind control

To resist temptation, you must stay away from it. So, if food is your greatest temptation, don't expose yourself to it. Do not stand in front of a show window of goodies and treats.

When your nerves get strained by your attempt to resist temptation, calm yourself with the help of:

- Camomile tea, St. John's Wort (an antidepressant) in tablet form or tea
- Oat straw (the willpower booster is helpful to smokers, drug addicts, it is said). Take 1 tsp (5 ml) three times a day or 20 drops of tincture three times a day.

Mind-soothing herbs can help perimenopausal or menopausal women overcome chocolate cravings. Take Black Cohosh, tablet 250 mg, three times a day.

Energize yourself

To lose weight, you have to burn more energy. But if you start the day feeling tired, then you might need some help. Exhausted bodies always look for quick fixes like high-fat, high-sugar remedies. Say no to a quick fix.

Most people when hungry and tired buy the first food they see. Break the bad habit. Herbal remedies known as adaptogens may be able to help you. Both your stamina and endurance will improve to see you through the day or a visit to the gym.

Adaptogens include:

Cordycaps—A Chinese mushroom remedy that is supposed to guarantee extra energy and stamina. Take 250 mg capsule half an hour before exercise.

Siberean ginseng—When used with Cordycaps, it makes for a major booster. The herb was reportedly used by Russian astronauts to combat flight fatigue.

Take one 100 mg tablet (standardized extract) or four 500 mg tablets (dried bark) half an hour before exercise.

Herbal no-no's

Don't fall for hard-sell advertising and fantastic claims. Some herbal weight loss products can be dangerous, such as:

Herbal laxatives, often added to diet products. They may contain anthraquinones, compounds that stimulate the bowel to evacuate its contents. Some health experts believe that long-term use of this can lead to chronic constipation and damage the nerves. Avoid aloe, buckthorn, cascara, sagrada, rhubarb, senna, yellow dock.

Herbal stimulants—Some herbal products include speed-like ingredients to keep you stimulated and alert. Don't take these products if you have an existing health problem—heart or kidney disease, high blood pressure. Avoid products with ephedra (ma huang), guarana, betel, cola, caffeine, mate.

Multi-herb products—Some supplements contain a number of herbs. Multi-combinations don't work. Avoid this cocktail mix.

Herbal diuretics—Urination creates water loss. While harmless (unless you have a kidney problem), these products will not be effective in making you lose fat. Avoid supplements with buchu, corn silk, couch grass, dandelion tops.

Love and light!

Reference: Prevention Magazine, Douglas Schar, DipPhyt, MCPP, MNIMH

Watch "The Good Life," 11:30 p.m., Wednesday, Studio 23. Listen to "Ma Beauty po Naman", 6 p.m., Sunday, dzMM (630 KHZ).

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Rx MEDICard

Take Charge Doc!

Dr. Nicky S. Montoya

Take Charge Doc! is your weekly question and answer guide on general health issues and illnesses. MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. And in a common thrust with the campaigns of the government, Take Charge Doc! parallels its features on the Calendar of Health Events of the Department of Health.

Can cancer be prevented?

Some forms of cancer (CA) may be preventable. Like lung cancer for example, the world's most common cancer. This may be prevented by keeping away from cigarette smoking and from second hand smoke. Constipation is a risk-factor for colon cancer and both may be prevented by maintaining a diet rich in fiber. Liver cancer, which is caused by the Hepatitis virus, may also be prevented by vaccination against the virus. Skin cancer and melanomas may also be prevented by lessening prolonged periods of exposure to sunlight.

In women, having no children is a higher risk to developing breast CA compared to those with offspring. Likewise, risk for cervical cancer is correlated with multiple sexual partners and as studies have shown, husbands of women with cervical cancer reported significantly more sexual partners than did husbands of patients without the disease.

However, certain cancers may not be preventable like cancers of the lymph nodes (lymphomas) and leukemia. Soft tissue sarcomas and bone tumors are also non-preventable. While there are more cancers of this type, different risk factors have already been identified but it has not been established whether modifying these risk factors can prevent their occurrence.

This week's answer was provided by **Dr. Tommy U. Reyes**, our accredited Oncologist at the Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital (OLLH) in Sta. Mesa, Manila. Dr. Reyes joined MEDICard in 1999 but has been in practice of his profession for over 11 years now. He is a Medicine graduate of the University of Santo Tomas. In 1988, he took his residency training for a specialization in Internal Medicine followed by subspecialty residency in Oncology at the Philippine General Hospital. Dr. Reyes is a Fellow and Diplomate of the Philippine College of Physicians and the Philippine Society of Medical Oncology. For consultations, members may visit his clinic at OLLH, Room 429, Mondays to Fridays, from 9 AM to 12 noon.

BE HEARD AND BE READ. Write to DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA (c/o *TAKE CHARGE DOC!*) or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for inquiries on health matters.

MEDICard is the first HMO in the Philippines and the whole Asia Pacific Region to be ISO CERTIFIED

[illegible]

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Front, side, back half circle

This ballet-inspired exercise firms up the buttocks.

Equipment:

Optional: A sturdy piece of furniture to hold for balance

Exercise technique:

1. Start with your right leg extended in front of you with toes touching the floor.
2. In one smooth controlled move, draw a half circle with your toes from front to the side to the back.
3. Return to starting position.
4. Do the desired number of half circles on one leg, then switch to the other side.

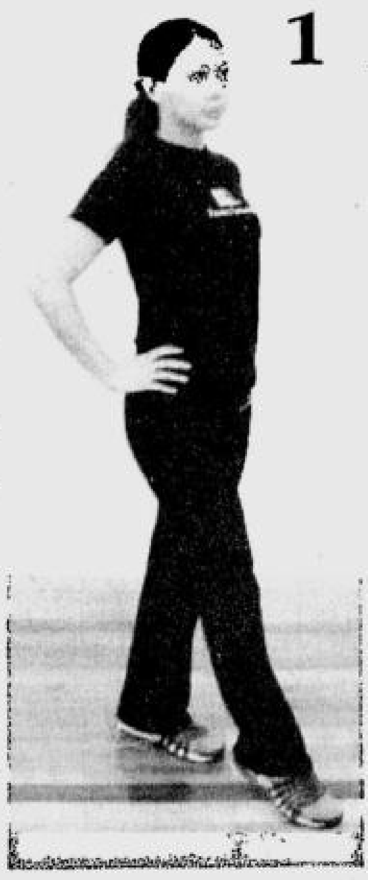
Performance tips:

1. Exhale on the half circle; inhale as you bring your leg forward to starting position.
2. Consciously squeeze your buttocks as you reach the end of the half circle with the leg behind you.
3. Take care not to arch your back as you swing your leg behind. Hold the abdominals in.

Repetitions:

Ten repetitions per side.

1



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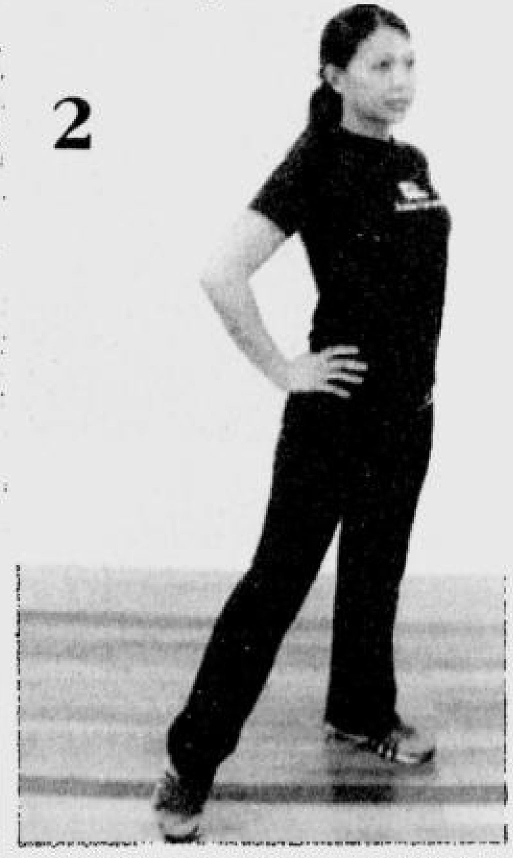

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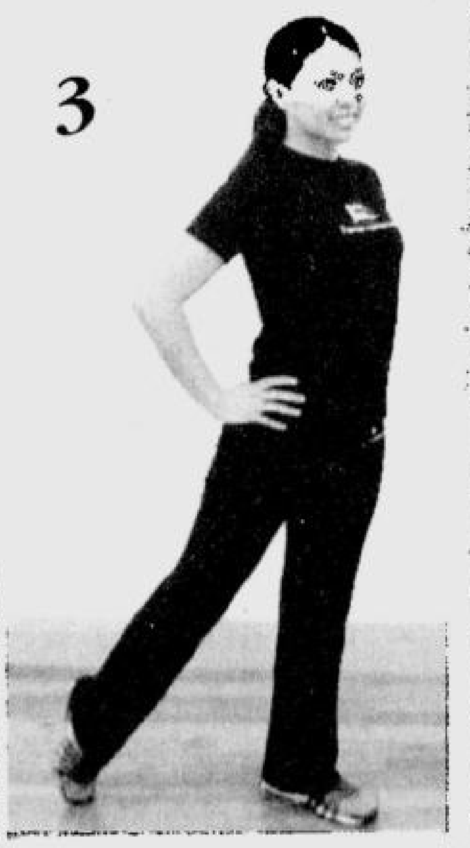


E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

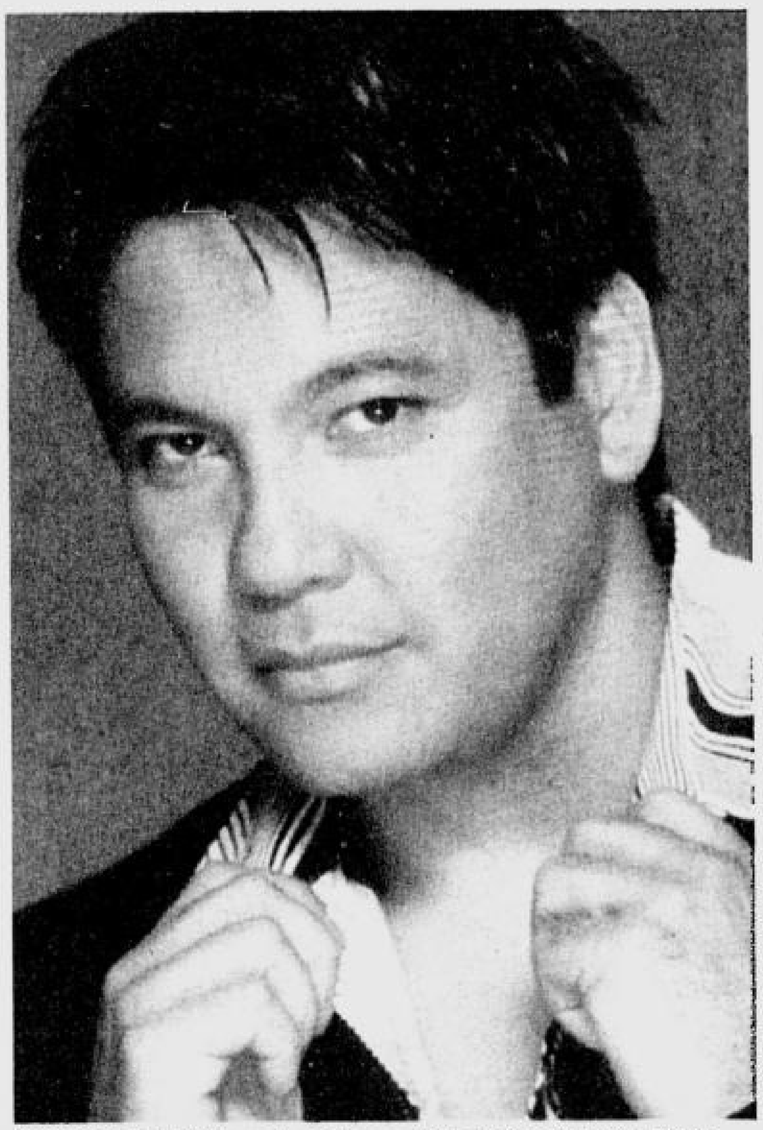
Editor **Louie C. Camino**
Assistant Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

ENTERTAINMENT *Metro*

Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

First heard in the Burt Reynolds-Goldie Hawn movie in '82, the song has been covered by Bennett, Bassey, Mathis, Belafonte, McGovern, Sinatra and Streisand. Now Nievera and Austin are singing it in their Cebu and Araneta shows

PATTI Austin sang the original version of the Legrand-Bergman composition in a duet with James Ingram.



"THE MADMAN" is excited. It's one of his all-time favorite ditties.

Martin, Patti keep the music playing

THE SONG "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?" remains one of the most covered love duets in the history of contemporary music.

It was first heard in the 1982 Norman Jewison film, "Best Friends," starring Burt Reynolds and Goldie Hawn as a long-time team of screenwriters who decide to take their partnership to the altar as husband and wife.

When the movie was released in 1982, the song, originally performed by Patti Austin and James Ingram, was nominated for an Oscar for Best Song. The song was, after all, created by the revered Academy-award winning team of Michel Legrand and lyricists Alan and Marilyn Bergman.

Like in many past cases, long after the film has faded from memory, the song lives on as singers from other genres and generations continue to record their own versions of it. Some of the music giants who have made solo recordings of "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?" are Tony Bennett, Shirley Bassey, Johnny Mathis, Harry Belafonte, Maureen McGovern, Frank Sinatra and, most recently, Barbra Streisand in her latest album.

Our very own concert king, Martin Nievera, considers the song "one of my favorites of all time."

"To sing it with the original singer is a dream come true for any male singer anywhere in the civilized world," adds Nievera, who is performing in a back-to-back concert with Austin herself on Jan. 28 in Cebu City and on Jan. 29 at the Araneta Coliseum.

"I just hope James (Ingram) won't mind," Nievera jokes, referring to the other singer who originally did the duet with Austin.

Funny singer

Although performing the classic duet is just one highlight of the show, Nievera is also thrilled to have been chosen to perform with the American recording star in this first-ever collaboration.

"Hopefully the audience is just as excited," says Nievera.

Austin is considered as one of the best-selling international recording artists in the Philippines and is loved and respected by Filipinos mainly because of her songs which tug at the heart of the romantic and sentimental music lover. The fact that she also happens to be one of the funniest and most likeable concert artists around only adds to her endearing qualities. Her concerts, always punctuated with unexpected blasts of humor.

Also known for "Baby Come to Me," her other duet with James Ingram, Austin is equally admired back home for her rendition of Stephen Bishop's "It Might Be You" and her other signature hits like "Love is Gonna Getcha," "Through the Test of Time," "Stop, Look, Listen," "Rhythm of the Street" and many others.

The Filipino and the American singers are also performing in "Martin Nievera and Patti Austin Live in Concert," touted as the first ever back-to-back performance of the Pinoy Concert King and the American recording star on US soil.

"I hope the American audiences will see that music is truly universal and that putting Patti and I together would be a sign of other combinations of performers from both our countries in the future," says Nievera. "I hope I can make our country proud as I perform with one of the world's best hitmakers of all time."

2 nights in a row

See for yourself how the two singers keep the music playing when they perform on Friday, Jan. 28, at the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel Grand Ballroom starting at 8:30 p.m.

Tickets are available at SM Department Store Cebu, (032) 231-2423 or (032) 231-0627; Dunkin Donuts, (032) 346-7256); National Bookstore, (032) 255-4644; and all Rose Pharmacy Branches.

The duo will then fly to Manila for another performance at the Araneta Coliseum on Saturday, Jan. 29, also at 8:30 p.m.

Tickets for the Araneta concert are available at all SM Ticketnet outlets, 911-5555. You may also call Maximedia, 551-7777, for ticket inquiries.

"Martin Nievera and Patti Austin Live in Concert" is presented by Maxi-Media in association with Smart Buddy, Smart Gold, SM Cinema, Korenberg, Abramowitz & Feldun, A Law Corporation and Associated Broadcasting Co. (ABC 5), in cooperation with Farlin Baby Care Products, The Philippine Star, Fibrosine, Chowking, Pharmaton, Starcruises, Manila Bulletin and Waterfront Cebu City Hotel.

It is also brought by Kremil-S, Baileys and Alberto Shoes.

Media partners for the Manila concert are 105.1 Crossover, Joey @ 92.3 Rhythms, 97.9 Home Radio, Mellow Touch 94.7 and Energy FM Manila.

The media partners for the Cebu concert include 90.7 Crossover Cebu, dyBN Killer Bee, dyKI Smooth FM 89.9, dyWF Smash FM, dyLA-AM, Energy FM dyAC Cebu, Charlie @ 101.9 FM, while print media sponsors are Sunstar Cebu, The Freeman and Cebu Daily News.

RICHARD and Angel, Mark and Jennylyn in a plot that sees their characters from high school to the corporate world

'Mulawin' stars soar in Valentine movie

"LET THE Love Begin" is a romantic story focused on young people with a touch of comedy and drama. It stars Richard Gutierrez , Angel Locsin, Mark Herras and Jennylyn Mercado, whose characters trace their love story from high school to college to the corporate world.

Directed by Mac Alejandre and written by RJ Nuevas and Suzette Doctolero, "Let the Love Begin" is the comeback movie of GMA Films headed by Annette Gozon.

Co-starring in "Let the Love Begin" are Ms Gloria Romero, Bearwin Meily, Tuesday Vargas, Tonton Gutierrez, Nanette Inventor, Geoff Rodriguez, Polo Ravales, and Paolo Contis in a special role.

Richard and Angel are the stars of the top-rated GMA soap fantasy "Mulawin." Angel is the "crush ng bayan" who is said to have "tamed" the runaway heart of Richard, known as the country's most desirable actor today.

"StarStruck" winners Mark and Jennylyn are said to be playing sweet music together.

"Let the Love Begin" is set to open during the Valentine season.

International ad fest registration deadline

MEDIA practitioners from the Philippines who are interested in attending the 52nd International Advertising Festival can now register online at www.canneslions.com.

The web site provides information on delegate registration, hotel reservations and other practical information.

The deadline for registration of official delegates is May 13, 2005.

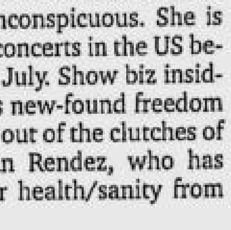
Entry kits for the competitions during the advertising festival are also available online starting Thursday, Feb. 3.

The 52nd International Advertising Festival will be held on June 19-25, 2005 in Cannes, France.

Shame and scandal in the host/comic's family

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal



A MAJOR show biz scandal involving the son of a TV host/comedian and his (the son's) wife and mistress (also a TV host) may erupt anytime now.

The comedian's son ought to be thankful that his wife is well-bred, which is why she has kept her silence for so long. As her cousin told me: "*Kung ibang babae lang 'yan* [had this been another woman], she would have caused trouble and ruined his career. But she's got too much class to do that."

The younger man is a budding TV host, too, and is being packaged as an eligible and decent bachelor. What irks the wife at this point is how her husband has humiliated her, the cousin said: "It's bad enough that he does not give regular support to their kids ... he also treats her like trash."

The host/comedian has told his daughter-in-law that he would never talk to his son's mistress but now he openly teases the clandestine lovers on his show. The wife has filed charges for damages against the mistress and is seeking child support from the husband.

"It's not the money," the distraught woman said. "It's the principle behind it."

My source added: "On her own she can afford to raise their kids because she comes from a well-off family."

I wonder how the dad, son and mistress will handle the situation if it becomes headline news in their respective talk shows?

Isn't it weird that talk show hosts are often more controversial than their guest celebrities?

Pass the remote, please ...

What a joke

YNEZ Veneracion vehemently denies that she had something going with young star **Alvin Aragon**. The poor teen claims that Ynez just used him for publicity. It's endlessly amusing to watch them in this word war on nationwide TV. Just last December, Alvin was a no-show at the blessing of Vivace Salon (my fave parlor) in Kapitolyo because Ynez "kidnapped" him after a show. My colleague **Tom Adrales**, who had been with Alvin during that show, texted me to apologize, since he promised to bring Alvin to the salon's ribbon-cutting ceremonies. Tom said he was shocked when Ynez snatched Alvin just like that. Now they're fighting like they never knew each other? I can't stop laughing. Will hold my breath till the next gimmick

Freedom in Frisco

NORA Aunor is said to be savoring her freedom in San Francisco for several months now. The superstar is enjoying a life of relative anonymity there, but of course old-timer Pinoys recognize her even if she tries as much as possible to remain inconspicuous. She is slated to do some more concerts in the US before she comes home in July. Show biz insiders wonder if La Aunor's new-found freedom also means she is finally out of the clutches of her troubled lover John Rendez, who has been detrimental to her health/sanity from the very start.

'Let the Love Begin'

GMA FILMS' "Let the Love Begin" is sure to leave Filipinos love-struck in February. **Richard Gutierrez** and **Angel Locsin** topbill the Valentine offering. No other title could better express what the couple's fans have been wishing for them. Though neither Richard nor Angel have admitted that they have fallen in love with each other, their actions speak volumes. They are the lovers Aguiluz and Alwina in the top-rating GMA *fantaserye* "Mulawin." The chemistry is undeniable and wonderful.

Also in "Let the Love Begin" are heartthrobs **Mark Herras** and **Jennylyn Mercado**. Offscreen, love has also begun for these two. Their love team started when they emerged as "StarStruck Ultimate Survivors." Appearing as lovers in subsequent shows, they soon took their onscreen romance to the next level. GMA Films' Valentine movie puts this matchup in a new light, and Mark and Jennylen have never been sweeter.

For feedback, e-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

'Elektra' for special children

FROM the pages of Marvel Comics, creator of "X-Men" and "Spider-Man," comes Elektra, the first action event movie of the year. In the ultimate battle between good and evil stands a warrior who makes the choice that tips the balance.

SHOW TIME

Maryridge School, a school for special children located in BF Homes, Parañaque, will mount a premiere screening of this film on Friday, Jan. 21, 8 p.m., at SM Megamall Cinema 10. Proceeds of the fund-raising event will go to the school's special projects.

Jennifer Garner stars in the title role as a strong, mysterious and sexy action heroine, a lethal synthesis of grace and power. Not long after recovering from seemingly mortal wounds, Elektra severes all ties with the world, living only for her next assignment. But she is forced to make a decision that can take her life in a new direction or destroy her.

After Garner made a brief, tantalizing appearance as Elektra in the 2003 movie "Daredevil," film executives were eager to have her reprise the role, but this time in her own movie.

Garner trained long and hard to play the Elektra character, a warrior without limits. Already physically fit and skilled in various fighting techniques from her work on the television series "Alias," Garner took her martial arts training to a new level under the guidance of Elektra's stunt coordinators and fight choreographers.

A bonus for Garner, and the comic's multitude of fans, is that this time, Elektra dons a red costume that stays true to the colors worn by the character in the Marvel stories.

With Garner aboard and the script taking shape, Rob Bowman joined the production as director. Bowman's credentials as a genre film helmer are impeccable: he won three Golden Globes for producing and directing "The X-files" TV series, helmed the successful "The X-files" feature film, and directed the science fiction adventure "Reign of Fire."

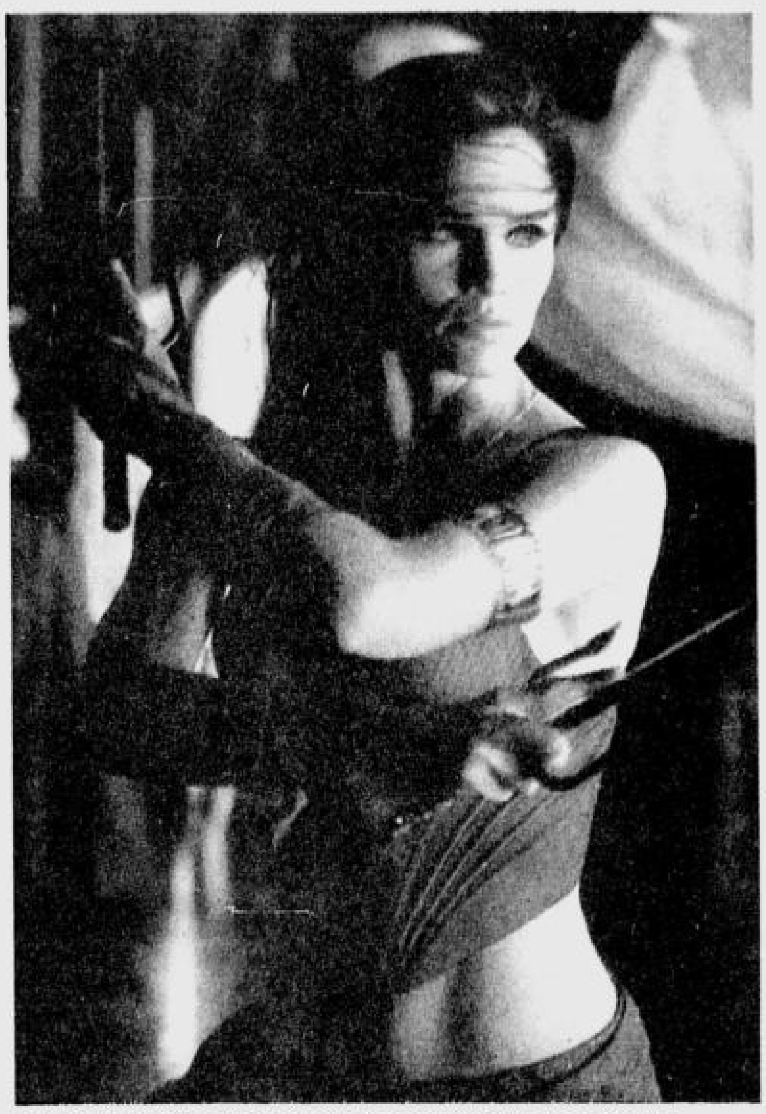
"Elektra" is produced by Arnon Milchan ("Man on Fire"), Gary Foster ("Daredevil") and Marvel's Avi Arad ("Spider-Man 2").

Key players in Elektra's journey are Stick, a blind martial arts master responsible for Elektra's "resurrection," and Mark Miller and Abby Miller, a father and daughter on the run from The Hand, a powerful syndicate whose members practice the dark martial art of ninjitsu.

Unlike most comic book heroes, Elektra possesses no super-human physical powers. Instead, she makes maximum use of her incredible physical prowess and martial arts skills. He has the ability to see into the future, a skill known as *kimagure*, which she has honed through countless hours of deep meditation.

Elektra learned the art of kimagure from her mentor Stick, who has the composure of a monk and the raw smarts of a street fighter. Elektra once was Stick's star pupil, but her inability to reach beyond her dark impulses led to her expulsion from Stick's training compound.

"She's fighting the inevitability of her own humanity," says Garner of her character. "It's a fantastic story, one that I think people can relate to."



MARTIAL ARTS, not superpowers. Jennifer Garner as Elektra

'Stairway to Heaven' starts climbing

GMA Network yesterday premiered the weeknight primetime soap "Stairway to Heaven."

Starring Korean heartthrob Kwon Sang-woo and Choi Ji-woo, "Stairway to Heaven" is another anticipated "Koreanovela" to be shown on Philippine television.

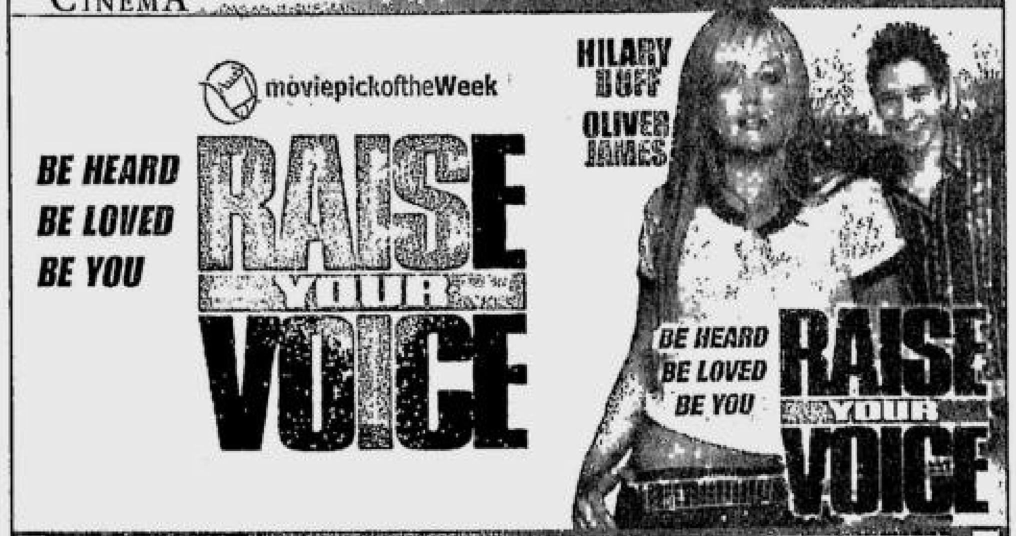
In several Asian countries where it was shown, "Stairway to Heaven" registered remarkable ratings and captured viewers' hearts with its poignant tale of selfless love and the heartrending performance of its cast.

The Asian television hit is the story of Cholo (Kwon Sang-woo) and Jodi (Choi Ji-woo), who loved each other since childhood but were separated by fate. Jodi is left behind, silently enduring the cruelty of her stepmother and stepsister who later plot to kill her.

Jodi's stepbrother Charlie (Shin Hyun-joon) is the only one who is not cruel to her, but his affection is more than brotherly love. He lies to her and makes her believe she loves no one else but him after an accident wipes out her memory. He renames her Jenna, hoping to give her a new identity.

But Cholo returns and finds Jenna, and he knows deep in his heart that she is Jodi, the only woman he will ever love. He pursues Jenna and vows to bring back her memory and rekindle their undying love for each other.

SM CINEMA movietime



OPENS THIS WEEK

RAISE YOUR VOICE
MTRCB RATING: GP

Following the death of her brother in a car accident, a teenage girl from a small town spends the summer in Los Angeles studying at a performing arts school which exposes her to a whole new world and way of life outside the sheltered existence and social circles she's always known.

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IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN
MTRCB RATING: R13

Carmen, a successful girl in her late twenties, has had enough. Her boyfriend is cheating on her, and at work her clients seem to believe that sex should be offered as one of the company services. Carmen puts an ad on the Internet asking to meet a sensitive, intelligent man with a good sense of humor ... but he must be impotent. What follows is a hilarious touching story of love and misunderstanding, laughter and tears, and an enjoyable roller coaster of a relationship in this joyous romantic comedy for our times.

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8 HONEY
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11 SIGAW
12 MANO PO 3

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9 ENTENG KABISOTE
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11 MANO PO 3
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8 RAISE YOUR VOICE
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10 NATIONAL TREASURE

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8 OCEAN'S TWELVE
9 MANO PO 3
10 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

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7 BLADE TRINITY
8 KUNG FU HUSTLE

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3 BLADE TRINITY
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Backroom bids '04 in riotous party

AT THE end of the merrymaking, bosses Boy Abunda (extreme left) and Bong Quintana (back row, third from left) join the Backroom managers, trainers, publicists, talents and guests.

TALENT managers, trainers, and publicists Backroom Inc. said goodbye to 2004 and hello to 2005 with appropriate "fireworks."

A sluggish economy, skidding peso, and sky-rocketing prices notwithstanding, the group threw a holiday bash that made it clear how fruitful, in fact, the past year had been for its artists and staff.

Backroom bosses Boy Abunda and Bong Quintana led the merrymaking after Rev. Father Alex of the St. Joseph Parish celebrated Mass. Bong and Kakai Brosas hosted the program that was punctuated with riotous parlor games and big-prize raffles. Top winners were Luis Cardona, Philip Roxas and road manager Ryan Brusola.

Supervisor Maryann Sta. Ana spoke on behalf of the whole PR staff—Irene de Leon, Almed Garcia, Cynthia Espiritu, Cardona and Jet Valle. Booking manager Rowena Salido pledged loyalty and support to the company.

And oh, the grand staff presentations! The tandem of Valle and Lance Sarmiento of the talent division won the nod of judges Moy Ortiz, musical director Beth Martin, director Bobby Garcia, and PCIB's Aileen Robles for the grand prize. The duo performed "Yeah, Yeah" by Usher and "Shut Up" by Black Eyed Peas.

Second place went to road manager Jonathan Valdez, with his rendition of Aerosmith's "I Don't Wanna Miss a Thing"—as a lavishly outfitted fairy godmother. Brusola won third prize with a number from "Little Mermaid."

Ai Ai turned up for the affair, as did artists K and the Boxers, The Company, Kim de los Santos, Erik Santos, Bobby Garcia, Bianca Gonzalez, Mariel Rodriguez, Drew Arellano, Chase Tinio, and AJ Dee.

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1	BLADE III	10:40, 1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00	R-13
2	OCEAN'S 12	11:55, 2:40, 5:25 8:10, 11:00	PG-13
3	KUNG FU HUSTLE	11:00, 1:25, 3:50 6:15, 8:40, 11:00	PG-13
4	RAISE YOUR VOICE	11:00, 1:20, 3:45 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	GP

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RAISE YOUR VOICE GP 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10	OCEAN'S TWELVE PG13 11:40,2:10,4:40,7:10,9:40	BLADE 3: TRINITY R13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:20
KUNG FU HUSTLE PG13 1:25,3:35,5:45,7:55,10:05	OCEAN'S TWELVE PG13 1:20,3:50,6:20,8:50	OCEAN'S TWELVE PG13 12:30,3:00,5:30,8:00,10:30

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KUNG FU HUSTLE
12:50 3:00 5:10 7:20 9:30

RAISE YOUR VOICE
12:30 2:40 4:50 7:00 9:10

ALI MALL CINEMAS

1	Dolby	OCEAN'S TWELVE	12:00 2:50 5:40 8:30
2	SDDS	BLADE: TRINITY	11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30
3	dts	KUNG FU HUSTLE	11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 8:40
4	Dolby	SO HAPPY TOGETHER	11:30 1:50 4:10 6:30 8:50
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FS 11:30AM, 2:10PM, 4:50PM, 7:30PM, LMF 10:05PM (PG-13)

② KUNG FU HUSTLE
FS 12:20PM, 2:45PM, 5:10PM, 7:35PM, LMF 10:00P (PG-13)

③ BLADE TRINITY
FS 12:00PM, 2:30PM, 5:00PM, 7:30PM, LMF 10:00PM (R-13)

④ RAISE YOUR VOICE
FS 11:40AM, 2:00PM, 4:20PM, 6:40PM, LMF 9:00PM (GP)

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FS 1:15PM, 3:55PM, 6:35PM, LMF 9:15PM ((PG-13)
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GALLERIA 632-9115/16

1 OCEAN'S TWELVE • THX 1:45 4:30 7:15 10:00	6 OCEAN'S TWELVE 10:30 1:15 4:00 6:45 9:30
2 BLADE TRINITY 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	7 PANAGHOY SA SUBA 11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25 10:00
3 IN SEARCH OF THE IMPOTENT MAN 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00	8 FIRST DAUGHTER 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 NATIONAL TREASURE 11:00 1:45 4:30 7:15 10:00	9 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	10 RAISE YOUR VOICE 11:20 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00

ERMITA 538-7809 to 12

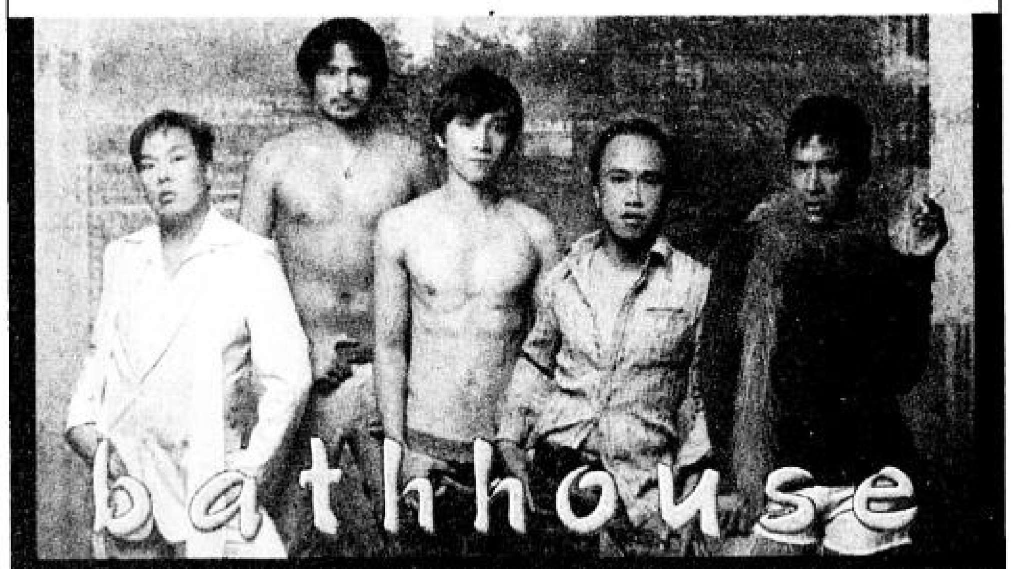
1 BLADE TRINITY	10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
2 RAISE YOUR VOICE 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50	5 NATIONAL TREASURE 10:45 1:30 4:15 7:00 9:45
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50	6 RESERVE
4 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN 10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45	7 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45

METRO EAST 682-8193/99 • 682-8280

1 RAISE YOUR VOICE 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00	5 TAXI 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
2 NATIONAL TREASURE 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00	6 OCEAN'S TWELVE 12:05 2:45 5:25 8:05
3 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER 12:05 2:15 4:25 6:40 9:00	7 KUNG FU HUSTLE 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30
4 SIGAW 11:00 1:05 3:10 5:15 7:20 9:30	8 BLADE TRINITY 11:50 2:30 5:10 7:50 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 OCEAN'S TWELVE 11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25	5 KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55
2 NATIONAL TREASURE 10:40 1:00 3:30 6:00 8:30	6 BLADE TRINITY 10:20 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25
3 SIGAW 11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30	7 ENTENG KABISOTE 12:45 3:15 5:45 8:25
4 TAXI 11:30 1:45 4:00 6:15 8:30	8 RESERVE



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2 BLADE TRINITY 11:30 1:50 4:10 6:30 8:50	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:30 1:50 4:10 6:30 8:50

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1 SIGAW 11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 10:50 1:15 3:40 6:05 8:30
2 MANO PO 3 11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30	4 SALAT SA LIGAYA 11:20 1:10 3:00 4:50 6:40 8:30

CAINTA 240 4661

1 OCEAN'S TWELVE 12:20 3:00 5:40 8:20	3 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:55 1:25 3:55 6:25 8:55
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 11:00 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:20	4 BLADE TRINITY 12:50 3:30 6 10 8:50

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2 can watch Sting concert in KL, thanks to Dream Satellite TV

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TWO LUCKY subscribers to Dream Satellite TV will get to watch Sting's "Sacred Love" tour in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Feb. 1 with Dream Satellite TV and Channel [V]'s Dreamin' Sting promo.

Dream subscribers can subscribe, reload or upgrade to Dream Plan 750 to be entitled to one raffle entry for the Dreamin' Sting promo. They may opt to load more than once since each 750 reload gives them one raffle entry during the promo period that ends on Jan. 23.

Dream subscribers under Plan 750 will also be entitled to one raffle entry for every Dream 750 reload, while existing Dream subscribers with lower plans and upgrades to Dream 750 will earn one raffle entry for every reload.

Two winners will be randomly drawn. Each winner will get two round-trip Philippine Airlines tickets to Kuala Lumpur and hotel accommodations for 3 days and 2 nights at the Concorde Hotel from Jan. 31 to Feb. 2, aside from the tickets to Sting's "Sacred Love" concert on Feb. 1 at the Putra Stadium, Bukit, Jalil, Kuala Lumpur.

Winners will be notified on how to claim their prizes.

For a glimpse of what to expect in Sting's "Sacred Love" concert tour, Channel [V] has put together a series of shows on the legendary singer, every Sunday this January at 7 p.m.

Channel [V] is available on Dream Satellite TV on Channel 42.

"BROOKLYN THE MUSICAL" was the only new musical on Broadway last fall; the other two—"Pacific Overtures" and "La Cage aux Folles"—were revivals. Well, things have turned around.

7, Williams bring hope to Great White Way

NEW YORK—Seven new musicals, a Tennessee Williams mini-festival, even a couple of new plays and a parade of stars—a busy second half of the 2004-2005 theater season holds the possibility that spring could push the Broadway box office to levels not seen since before Sept. 11.

That's the cheerful prognosis of Jed Bernstein, head of the League of American Theatres and Producers, Broadway's official trade organization.

What all the activity has done is produce a theater-booking jam—with every one of Broadway's more than 30 playhouses filled or awaiting new productions.

The situation has left the season's most-praised play, John Patrick Shanley's "Doubt," without a theater for its expected transfer from off-Broadway to Broadway.

"Doubt," set in the Bronx in 1964, stars Cherry Jones as an authoritarian nun who suspects a priest (Brian O'Byrne) of having more than a passing interest in a young male student in the Catholic school she oversees. The nun's certainty is at the center of the play, which needs to arrive on Broadway by May 4 to be eligible for the 2005 Tony Awards.

There was a scarcity of new musicals on Broadway last fall. Only "Brooklyn The Musical" showed up—along with two revivals, "Pacific Overtures" and "La Cage aux Folles." Things have changed. Now seven—plus one musical revival—will arrive by the Tony cutoff. Even January, usually a bleak month for Broadway openings, will have a song-and-dance offering.

First up, "Little Women," based on Louisa May Alcott's sturdy tale of the March family, particularly its daughters. There have been three major film versions, featuring Katharine Hepburn (1933), June Allyson (1949) and Winona Ryder (1994) as Alcott's spirited heroine Jo March—not to mention an opera and several TV versions.

Sutton Foster, a Tony winner for her portrayal of the ultimate ambitious flapper in "Thoroughly Modern Millie," stars in the Broadway incarnation, opening Jan. 23 at the Virginia Theatre. Maureen McGovern co-stars as Marmee in this production, which has a book by Allan Knee ("Finding Neverland"), music by Jason Howland and lyrics by Mindi Dickstein.

Beach Boys music

Music of the surfing variety can be found in "Good Vibrations," which brings the sounds of the Beach Boys to the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Feb. 2. The story, supplied by Richard Dresser, follows a group of teenagers from New England who head to the sands of Southern California in search of sun and fun. The music will include many of the Beach Boys' biggest hits including, of course, the show's title song.

Charlatans take center stage in "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels," the new musical starring John Lithgow and Norbert Leo Butz as a pair of con men operating on the Riviera. Joanna Gleason, Sara Gettelfinger and Sherie Rene Scott portray three of their victims. The book is by Jeffrey Lane and the score by David Yazbek, who did the music and lyrics for "The Full Monty." The opening: March 3 at the Imperial.

Scalawags of a more medieval sort apparently will be found in "Monty Python's Spamalot," which its creators say is shamelessly lifted from the film "Monty Python and the Holy Grail." Much of the merriment will be provided by three accomplished comic actors—David Hyde Pierce, late of "Frasier," Hank Azaria and, as King Arthur, Tim Curry. The book and lyrics are by Python guru Eric Idle and the music by Idle and John DuPrez. Mike Nichols directs. The curtain rises March 17 at the Shubert.

A week later, March 24, "All Shook Up" arrives at the Palace Theatre. The musical inserts such Elvis Presley classics as "Love Me Tender," "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Hound Dog" into a twangy tale of a hip-swivlin' stranger who upends a small Tennessee town in the mid-1950s. The Presley-like hero is played by newcomer Cheyenne Jackson, and Jenn Gambatese is the girl who wins his heart. The plot? Word is that Joe DiPietro has based it loosely on Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night."

> Every one of Broadway's more than 30 playhouses is either filled or awaiting new productions: There's a booking jam!

Romance in a different key can be found in "The Light in the Piazza," based on the bittersweet novella by Elizabeth Spencer. With a score by Adam Guettel and a book by Craig Lucas, "Piazza" tells the story of a Southern matron and her daughter traveling in Italy and of the handsome Italian who romances the young woman. The curtain goes up April 18 at the Vivian Beaumont in Lincoln Center.

"Sweet Charity," the spring's lone musical revival, opens April 21 at the Al Hirschfeld Theatre. Christina Applegate, best known as the kittenish daughter on television's "Married With Children," inherits the role of Charity Hope Valentine, the taxi dancer with the heart of gold. In 1966, Gwen Verdon was the original Charity, directed by Bob Fosse, who also supplied the sizzling choreography.

This time around the director is Walter Bobbie, who guided the still-running revival of "Chicago" to box-office glory, and the choreographer is Wayne Cilento.

Potent star power

The newly re-christened Hilton Theatre will be the home of "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang," the lavish London hit based on Ian Fleming's children's book and the 1968 movie which starred Dick Van Dyke and Sally Ann Howes.

On Broadway, Raul Esparza will be inventor Caractacus Potts and Erin Dilly plays Truly Scrumptious, the ultimate name for a musical-comedy heroine. And, of course, there is that flying car. Expect it to soar over the Hilton on April 28, with preview performances beginning a month earlier.

Play revivals will offer some potent star power.

Consider two Tennessee Williams classics—"The Glass Menagerie" and "A Streetcar Named Desire"—which arrive about five weeks apart.

"Menagerie" is up first, with Jessica Lange portraying that overbearing matriarch Amanda Wingfield; Dallas Roberts, her rebellious son Tom; Sarah Paulson, her fragile daughter Laura, and Josh Lucas, the Gentleman Caller. The director is David Leveaux. Look for it March 15 at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

"Streetcar" stars Natasha Richardson as the fading Southern belle Blanche Du Bois. John C. Reilly is her hulking nemesis, the brutish Stanley Kowalski, and Amy Ryan portrays his devoted wife, Stella. Edward Hall directs this Roundabout Theatre Company production opening April 26 at Studio 54.

Kathleen Turner plays another formidable woman, Martha, in a revival of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" The bruising Edward Albee drama has set March 20 as its opening night at the Longacre. Bill Irwin, last seen on Broadway in Albee's "The Goat," portrays Martha's husband, George.

Shakespeare revivals on Broadway are rare, but the Belasco Theatre will get a production of "Julius Caesar" on April 3, starring Denzel Washington as Brutus, William Sandler as Caesar, Colm Feore as Cassius and Jessica Hecht as Portia. The director is Daniel Sullivan, best known for his work on such plays as "Proof" and "Intimate Apparel."

The following day, April 4, brings Marsha Mason, Delta Burke, Christine Ebersole and Frances Sternhagen to the Lyceum Theatre, in a new production of "Steel Magnolias." Robert Harling's look at the owner and customers in a beauty parlor in a small Louisiana town was a big hit off-Broadway in 1987 as well as a popular movie.

James Earl Jones and Leslie Uggams will star in a production of "On Golden Pond," the Ernest Thompson drama about a retired professor who returns to family's Maine cottage for one last time. Most people know it from the movie version which starred Henry Fonda and Katharine Hepburn. The production opens April 7 at the Cort.

Two new plays

A revival of "Glengarry Glen Ross," David Mamet's acerbic look at real-estate salesmen, also has an all-star cast that includes Alan Alda, Liev Schreiber, Tom Wopat, Jeffrey Tambor, Frederick Weller, Gordon Clapp and Jordan Lage. The shenanigans commence May 1 at the Royale.

On May 4, "Passion Play," the season's final revival, opens at the American Airlines Theater.

No cast has been announced for the Peter Nichols comedy about marriage and infidelity, but Mark Brokaw will direct the Roundabout Theatre Company production.

Donald Margulies, whose "Dinner With Friends" won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for drama, returns with "Brooklyn Boy," the story of a writer coping with success. Adam Arkin plays the writer.

Martin McDonagh's "The Pillowman" was a big hit for London's National Theatre in 2003. Now, with a cast headed by Bill Crudup and Jeff Goldblum, it arrives April 10 at the Booth.

And finally, after the five one-person shows of the fall, only a single one is in sight for the rest of the season.

It's "Freshly Squeezed," starring that Broadway perennial, Jackie Mason. His observations can be heard starting March 23 at the Helen Hayes.